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AUDREY DRUM

SIX MILES FROM A LEMON

A FARCE IN THREE ACTS

WALTER H. BAKER & CO. BOSTON

Six Miles From a Lemon

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A Farce in Three Acts

By
SIDNEY DRUM

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BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.
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Six Miles From a Lemon

CHARACTERS

CURTIS WOODWARD,
PETER WOODWARD,
LORD BUNN,
O. B. JACKSON,
LUCIUS PECK,
SETH KIMANDER,
MRS. CURTIS WOODWARD,
RUTH WOODWARD,
FREDERICKA POMEROY,
KEZIAH KIMANDER.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—The Woodward Homestead, Tuesday morning.

ACT II.—Lucius Peck's Grocery-store, Wednesday morning.

ACT III.—The Eagle Tavern, Wednesday afternoon.

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Six Miles from a Lemon

ACT I

SCENE.—*The living-room at the Woodward homestead. Typical New England furnishings. Dresser with dishes at rear. Cook-stove at* L., *with wood-box behind it. Table at* R., *set ready for meal. Queer-looking picture-frames on wall. It is a corner room, and there is an outside door at rear, in the middle, and one at left, with window alongside of each. A door on the right leads to the rest of the house. Door at right, rear, leads to pantry.*

MISS KIMANDER *discovered as the curtain rises, seated in high-backed chair at centre, facing audience. She is asleep, with her bonnet on, band-boxes at her feet, parcels in her hands, large picture-frame on her knees, with her chin resting on the top of it. Carpet-bag on floor near rear door. As*

curtain rises she lets go of a parcel, and snores loudly. Enter MRS. WOODWARD *at rear door.* CURTIS WOODWARD *appears in doorway following her.* MRS. WOODWARD, *with her back toward the audience, watches* CURTIS *as she draws off her gloves.*

CURTIS.

[*Outside.*] You—you—you villain! Come back here and carry in my trunk. I'll hold your team —— Say! Are you coming back? [*Throws his hands in the air with each epithet.*] Rascal! Pirate! Corsair! [*To* MRS. WOODWARD.] This is a nice beginning! Train six hours late bucking through snow-drifts, and highway robbery on top of that!

MRS. WOODWARD.

Curtis, Curtis! Don't make such an uproar! You'll rouse the village.

CURTIS.

Why, Dolly, he's galloped off with a five-dollar bill!

MRS. WOODWARD.

Oh, everybody knows everybody else in these little places. You can find him to-morrow.

[*Enter* CURTIS.] Why, Curtis! It may even be one of the boys you went to school with!

CURTIS.

Does sort of favor a chap I once licked. But he didn't appear to know me.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Thirty years would change you both. The Staceyville folks could hardly be expected to recognize you for the boy who left here thirty years ago in overalls.

CURTIS.

[*Pointing outdoors.*] Dolly, did I look like *that* when you first knew me?

MRS. WOODWARD.

I cannot tell a lie—[*pausing*] and I *will* not tell the truth [*laughs*]. So this is the house you were born in, Curtis? I almost know it from your description.

CURTIS.

Hasn't changed a line. On this happy occasion ——

MRS. WOODWARD.

On this happy occasion our trunk will be snowed under if you let it lie out there.

CURTIS.

Humph! That vagabond was too confoundedly busy making off with my five dollars. [*Exit* CURTIS *at rear door.* MRS. WOODWARD *goes about looking at pictures, etc. She suddenly discovers* MISS KIMANDER. *Reënter* CURTIS, *dragging trunk and brushing snow off it.* MRS. WOODWARD *points to* MISS KIMANDER. CURTIS *goes in front of* MISS KIMANDER.] Huh! [MISS KIMANDER *does not stir.* CURTIS *drags trunk in front of her and lets the end fall with a bang.* CURTIS, *louder.*] Huh!

[MISS KIMANDER *snores and releases her hold on a parcel, which falls.* MRS. WOODWARD *and* CURTIS *stand regarding her.* CURTIS *goes out rear door and returns with several valises, which he drops one at a time in front of* MISS KIMANDER, *saying "Huh!" each time more loudly.* CURTIS *takes* MISS KIMANDER *by the shoulder and shakes her.* MISS KIMANDER *awakes with a scream, and tries to escape by rear door, but* MRS. WOODWARD *is standing between her and the door.*

MISS KIMANDER.

Oh, Burglar! Good, kind Burglar! An' Mis' Burglar! Don't harm a poor lone female!

[MISS KIMANDER *flops down on her*

knees and lifts her hands imploringly, lifting at the same time the remaining packages which she carries by the strings.

CURTIS.

My *dear* Madam ——

MISS KIMANDER.

[*Putting her fingers in her ears and struggling to her feet.*] Oh, don't *speak* to me! How *dare* you! Let me go!

CURTIS.

Come, come! We are not burglars. We have rented this house for a week.

MISS KIMANDER.

[*Still holding her fingers in her ears.*] Go away, you bold, bad fellow! And you too, brazen-faced hussy!

CURTIS.

[*Louder.*] We are *not* burglars! We have rented this house for a week. [MISS KIMANDER *screams shrilly.*] Come here, Dolly. [MRS. WOODWARD *moves to* CURTIS'S *side.*] Now, together!

CURTIS AND MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Shouting.*] We are *not* burglars! We have rented this house for a we-e-e-ek!

MRS. WOODWARD.

Oh, my goodness!

CURTIS.

Hold her hands down, Dolly. [MRS. WOODWARD *forcibly removes* MISS KIMANDER'S *hands from her ears.* MISS KIMANDER *sits down on floor.* CURTIS *stands in front of her.*] We are not burglars. We have rented ——

MISS KIMANDER.

[*Getting to her feet.*] Well, I think you might have said so at first!

CURTIS.

Oh, woman, woman! Will you please call Miss Kimander?

MISS KIMANDER.

Mercy sakes! You must be Curt Woodward! I want to know! Mercy sakes! What a change thirty years does make! Mercy sakes! Mercy me!

MRS. WOODWARD.

I suppose they make changes in everybody.

If we had known you thirty years ago, it's very probable ——

CURTIS.

Never mind, Dolly. [*To* MISS KIMANDER.] We are expecting to have Miss Kimander, who we understand now owns the house, turn it over to us. Will you please call her?

MISS KIMANDER.

Mercy sakes! Why, Curtis Woodward! *I'm* Keziah Kimander!

CURTIS.

Well, I'll be—that is, I would be if I didn't have to not be.

MISS KIMANDER.

I understand what you mean, Curtis Woodward, and I just don't thank you one bit.

CURTIS.

Er—Kizzie, this is my wife.

MISS KIMANDER.

Happy to meet you, ma'am. [*Shakes hands with* MRS. WOODWARD.] And what notion brings you here, Curt? Seems when you could git along without the village for thirty years you wouldn't worry about it now.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Miss Kimander, talk about women's sentimentality! Just *ask* Mr. Woodward why we came here!

CURTIS.

Well, you see, Kizzie, I've been working so hard boring my way down in New York, raising a family and getting enough for them to eat ——

MISS KIMANDER.

And buyin' an English lord for your daughter —— Oh, we read the society colyum up here!

CURTIS.

Well, now, Kizzie, I always had a relish for a bargain, and this English lord was going so remarkably cheap! It would have been a sin not to ——

MRS. WOODWARD.

Curtis! I'm ashamed of you! [*To* MISS KIMANDER.] Whatever you've read about Lord Bunn, to whom I suppose you refer, you can attribute to the romancing of a fanciful journalist. I shall be glad if you will correct any reports you may hear connecting his name with ours.

MISS KIMANDER.

Why, mercy sakes, yes! If it'll be a comfort to you. Well, Curtis?

CURTIS.

You see, Kizzie, it's this way. I began to think how transitory is this world and its wealth—how fleeting ——

[*Casting his eyes up to the ceiling and joining his finger-tips.*

MISS KIMANDER.

[*Eagerly.*] You don't mean to say you've lost your money?

CURTIS.

I certainly have lost some lately, but I'll get it back or know the reason why.

[*Going to window right of rear door and looking out.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Smiling.*] I see I must shorten a long story. Mr. Woodward was seized with a sudden fit of sentiment, Miss Kimander. Nothing would do but we must come to pass our wedding anniversary here [*looking around*] in the very house in which he spent his boyhood. So here we are, and I'm sure we're going to have a charming time—for a week, at any rate.

[*While* MRS. WOODWARD *has been speaking,* CURTIS *has been dragging the baggage out at right-hand door.*

MISS KIMANDER.

It's likely to be that long, anyhow. The way this snow's coming down, I calculate there won't be a train out for days.

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*To* CURTIS.] You hear that, Curtis?

CURTIS.

I hear; but as we don't want to get out for a week I don't see that it interests us particularly.

MRS. WOODWARD.

But if we *should?*

CURTIS.

I believe that way down deep every woman is a born calamity prophet. Wouldn't you like to lay off your things and go through the house?

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Going toward right-hand door.*] I should like to, dearly. [*Pausing at door.*] Aren't you coming too?

CURTIS.

I'm powerfully tempted to go, but I want to enjoy every room to the full before I move on to another, and [*rubbing his hands and looking around*] I haven't even begun to bite into this one. [*Follows* MRS. WOODWARD *and points.*] There, you can go right up that stairway to the floor above. [*Exit* MRS. WOODWARD.] By George, I'm just itching to go along too. But it'd be like eating the whole box of candy at one sitting and not leaving a gum-drop for to-morrow. [*Watching* MRS. WOODWARD *through open door.*] Careful you don't hit your head on the ceiling. [*Closing door and approaching* MISS KIMANDER.] Well, Kizzie, and what are you doing yourself?

[CURTIS *roams around, paying very little heed to* MISS KIMANDER, *who follows him around as she speaks.*

MISS KIMANDER.

Oh, I'm telegraph operator, local correspondent for the County Gazette, and special representative for the New York Evening Palladium. [CURTIS *goes looking about the room. In the course of the following he puts his hands in his pockets while facing audience, and suddenly, as if reminded of the loss of the five dollars, goes to window at right of centre, rear, and looks out in the direction in which the stage-driver is sup-*

posed to have gone.] That is, I'm their representative when there's anything to represent. I haven't sent them any news yet. Couldn't you give me something I could send them?

CURTIS.

The New York Evening Palladium? No! I wouldn't admire to read even my obituary in it. Can't you beat that, Kizzie?

MISS KIMANDER.

Well, I'm writing a book on practical natural history.

CURTIS.

"How to Tell the Bulls from the Bilberries"; "How to Raise Toadstools in a Flower-Pot," eh?

MISS KIMANDER.

Ah! *Vastly* more useful. My subjects are the entire animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms. [*Indicating ornaments.*] Here's a candlestick made from a pig's tail. Fancy table-cover, made from skins of frogs. Picture-frame [*indicating one on wall*] made from varnished potato-bugs. Bunnit [*touching her hat*] corn-husks. Millinery [*touching bunch of artificial roses on hat*] potato-parings shellacked and painted. [*Getting picture-frame from floor*, L. C.] This here frame is constructed

from the toe-nails of animals—nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine of 'em. [*Placing frame on chair and pointing.*] Claws of bear — dog—common house-cat — porcupine—lynx—bob-cat ——

[CURTIS *jumps at mention of each animal.*

CURTIS.

Going to take it away with you?

MISS KIMANDER.

Yes. I want to put in one more toe-nail.

CURTIS.

[*Goes to wall and detaches potato-bug frame.*] Can't you carry two? Seems an awful pity to deprive you of this for a whole week—and it looks to me like it needed one more potato-bug.

MISS KIMANDER.

[*Takes a frame under each arm.*] Oh, you're *so* kind! I *did* hate to leave it, but I thought of the enjoyment you'd have regardin' it.

CURTIS.

I know, I know. But I think if I try hard I can bear up.

MISS KIMANDER.

I set great store by that toe-nail frame. [*Sentimentally.*] All mementoes of friends of mine—some of 'em dead and gone!

CURTIS.

What!

MISS KIMANDER.

Oh, I meant they give me the critters' claws. Mercy me! You didn't think I meant —— No, they give them to me. Peter, now, give me them wildcat toe-nails. Oh, by the way, speakin' of Peter, how is he? Your son, you know. Your daughter Ruth, too—how is she?

CURTIS.

Well, you certainly have kept tabs on me these thirty years. Yes, Peter and Ruth. Both hearty when we left. You see, we've run away from them. Peter, my boy, is a big fellow now ——

MISS KIMANDER.

Why, of course he is. The idea! I know all about Peter.

CURTIS.

Trust you people in the country for knowing what's going on. I'll bet the folks in this vil-

lage know almost more about Peter than his own father.

MISS KIMANDER.

Well, perhaps some little things, you know.

CURTIS.

Kizzie, you're a born journalist for certain. How do you do it? Clairvoyance must be your long suit.

MISS KIMANDER.

Clairvoyance? Stuff! My great holt is imagination. The poetic temper'ment. Here, I've got a sample poem right with me I'm workin' on. My masterpiece! [*Takes paper out of carpet-bag and unfolds it until it is the size of a newspaper. Clears her throat.*] Hum! Title: "Ashes of Roses."

CURTIS.

Mighty sensible title, too. Looks to me like a big thing. Is that all the poem?

MISS KIMANDER.

Mercy sakes, no! Here's more. [*Drawing several similar papers from carpet-bag.*] And I've got a lot of cantos in my head yet. It ain't near finished. [*As* MISS KIMANDER *starts to read,* MRS. WOODWARD *reënters from*

right. MISS KIMANDER, *reading.*] "When you and I were young, and our love like a crimson rose unfolded ——"

CURTIS.

No more, no more; I beg of you! She [*glancing over his shoulder*]—Dolly, my wife, you know, she can't stand poetry. That is, *beautiful* poetry, like yours. It—it's likely to give her convulsions. She—she *sees* things—visions, you know.

[*He waves his hands about his head.* MISS KIMANDER *sympathetically waves one finger in circles.*

MISS KIMANDER.

Very sad! Wouldn't you like to hear jest a *leetle* more—jest a leetle?

CURTIS.

Not to-day, not to-day!

[MRS. WOODWARD *has meanwhile seated herself on chair at left.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

Curtis!

CURTIS.

Yes, my dear?

[MISS KIMANDER *lays finger on* CURTIS'S *arm.*

MISS KIMANDER.

I understand. I'll come when you're alone ——

CURTIS.

[*Aghast.*] What! Come and read poetry to me alone? And such—such *warm* poetry? It makes me perspire freely to think of it. [CURTIS *mops his face with his handkerchief.*] No, no, Kizzie! If my wife heard that, it'd twist her into a knot.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Curtis!

CURTIS.

[*Going toward* MRS. WOODWARD.] Yes, yes, my dear.

MISS KIMANDER.

[*Gathering traps together.*] Sad, sad! But what a story! What a story for the New York Evening Palladium!

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*To* CURTIS.] When is Miss Kimander going to leave? Can't you tell her to go?

CURTIS.

What! Right out, like that?

MRS. WOODWARD.

Oh, no! But nicely. Can't you say something that will be a strong hint?

CURTIS.

Well, I guess I can. [CURTIS *goes toward* MISS KIMANDER *and speaks to her.*] She bites people when she has them—fits, you know. I think she's going to have one now!

[MRS. WOODWARD, *sitting with her hands folded, stares rather severely at* MISS KIMANDER. MISS KIMANDER *screams slightly, dives at her parcels and hurriedly makes for the rear door, the two picture-frames under her arms, and shedding parcels as she goes, stooping and grabbing at them as she loses them.* MRS. WOODWARD *rises as she approaches and holds out her hand.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

Good-day, Miss Kimander. *So* sorry you're going so soon.

MISS KIMANDER.

Mercy sakes! Mercy me!

[MISS KIMANDER *waves* MRS. WOODWARD *off with a picture-frame, curves around her in a semicircle, and exit at left-hand door.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

I declare! *What* did you say to her, Curtis, to make her bounce out so?

CURTIS.

[*Picking up* MISS KIMANDER'S *stray parcels and throwing them out of right-hand door.*] Didn't you *ask* me to? Don't you bother about the mechanical details. Hadn't you better begin making those biscuits we were getting an appetite for coming up?

MRS. WOODWARD.

Why, Miss Kimander has lunch all ready for us on the stove.

CURTIS.

I know, but no biscuits—none of the kind you used to make on the little cook-stove before we had a French chef to bedevil our meals.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Well, if I must.

[*During the following* CURTIS *gets a pair of blue overalls from valise and puts them on, hopping about on one leg in doing so.*

CURTIS.

You don't say it very enthusiastically.

MRS. WOODWARD.

It's all very well for you, Curtis, to come back to your boyhood home and renew acquaintances with your old friends—your *old* friends ——

CURTIS.

I give in to that. Kizzie is certainly no veal cutlet. Dolly [*going toward* MRS. WOODWARD], every year I go with you and the children to Newport, to Europe, and to other ungodly places that suit you, now don't I? And never a word ——

MRS. WOODWARD.

My dear, dear Curtis! I'm ashamed of myself. It must have been that dreadful—I mean that delightfully lively and amusing friend of yours. And it's such a *dear*, quaint old house! I *know* we're going to have the best kind of good time here ——

CURTIS.

Now, be careful. Don't slop over on the other side.

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Laughing.*] Where's my apron?

CURTIS.

[*Produces apron and ties it about* MRS. WOODWARD, *during which operation he gives her a hug and a kiss.*] Dolly, you're a brick. You'll find the fixings in that pantry, same as always, I guess.

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Going to pantry at rear,* CURTIS *following.*] Don't follow me around. You make me nervous. Do your share. Go get some wood.

[CURTIS *puts on his silk hat.* MRS. WOODWARD *laughs and points to it.* CURTIS *removes silk hat, and going to valise gets out old felt hat and puts it on.*

CURTIS.

All I need now is a straw to chew to make me feel at home. [CURTIS *goes to picture-frame on the wall and draws out straw. Is about to put it in his mouth, when he looks at it, looks at picture-frame, looks at place where potato-bug frame was hanging, and carefully replaces straw, shaking his head. He goes to wood-box behind the stove, opens it and looks in.*] Wood-box full. Shan't have to go out. Generally empty when I was a boy, so far as I can remember.

[CURTIS *picks up paper and sits down before stove to read, drawing off shoes and exposing blue woollen socks.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Working at table.*] I wonder what the children are doing now?

CURTIS.

They're pretty good children, but I'm not sorry to ease them off my mind for a few days.

MRS. WOODWARD.

And to get away from business?

CURTIS.

[*Reading paper.*] M-m-m—yes! Nothing short of an earthquake could upset the market now.

MRS. WOODWARD.

You're sure Mr. Perkins will do everything as it should be done while you're away?

CURTIS.

[*Looking up and laughing.*] Perkins is a first-rate lobster—I don't say it slangily. But he can float with the tide. If he weren't my partner, I'd like to see what sort of an acrobatic performance he could put up going *against* the

tide. No, no. I'll get him on the long-distance every morning and keep poor old Perkins's flippers from getting frazzled at the ends.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Just suppose the telephone wires should come down, with the trains all stalled ?

CURTIS.

Now, Dolly, don't let's holler "Extry!" before war's declared.

[CURTIS *resumes reading.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

If I weren't sure of your identity, Curtis, I'd think it was one of the natives speaking. I declare you've acquired the real Yankee twang.

CURTIS.

It's as much as I can do, on my native heath, to hold a straight tongue. By gum! I won't try! So long as I'm in Staceyville my tongue kin git kinked up as much as it's a mind to, an' I'm goin' to talk good old unadulterated United States, straight! [*Reading from paper.*] Here's richness! "Hubert Fox informs us that although turned ninety-two he has so far this winter thrashed out one hundred and twenty bushel of oats." [*Looking up.*] I'll bet Lord Bunn couldn't git an item like that printed about any of *his* family!

MRS. WOODWARD.

Dear, dear! You *are* so prejudiced against Lord Bunn!

CURTIS.

I ain't prejudiced against him personally, but that stock-jobbing blood-sucker, his father—I had all the experience with the English nobility I wanted when I ran up against him—or rather, when he ran up against me. And I ain't quit of him yet.

MRS. WOODWARD.

But Lord Bunn himself ——

CURTIS.

[*Laying down his paper.*] Now, I've simply made up my mind that I don't care to become a father to him. Lordy! Ruth don't want *two* husbands, and she's as good as engaged to young Valentine Quincy.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Sometimes, Curtis, I have an idea that neither she nor Valentine Quincy cares for each other enough for that, now.

CURTIS.

Dolly, you know that if there's one thing settled between the Quincy and Woodward

families, it's that this particular schoolboy and schoolgirl match is thoroughly satisfactory all 'round.

MRS. WOODWARD.

I hear he has been showing a great deal of attention lately to Thomasina Breitstein. Thomasina is a very pretty girl, and her father, although he is a brewer ——

CURTIS.

King Wurtzburger we call him in the Street.

MRS. WOODWARD.

I hope you know best.

CURTIS.

[*Returning to his paper.*] Humph! I *think* I do!

[*A knock is heard at left-hand door.* CURTIS *makes a dive for his shoes and gets them on, while* MRS. WOODWARD *goes to the door and opens it. Enter* LUCIUS PECK, *to sound of sleigh-bells, as if a horse were stamping outside.*

LUCIUS.

[*To horse outside.*] Stand still, thar! Whoa! [LUCIUS *shows signs of uncertainty as to whether*

he will leave the horse and remain, or not. Finally remains, and closes door, advancing toward CURTIS.] Good-day, sir! Your sarvant, ma'am! I s'pose you're the butler, sent on ahead, an' you, ma'am, are the cook, or the valley-de-chamber, or the second-story woman? Ha, ha!

CURTIS.

[*With dignity.*] I am Mr. Curtis Woodward, and this is Mrs. Woodward.

LUCIUS.

[*Gripping* CURTIS *by the hand and roughly drawing him forward.*] Curtis Woodward! Wal, I'll be —— Wal, dang my buttons! [*Continues shaking* CURTIS'S *hand.*] *Dang* my buttons, one an' all!

[LUCIUS *drops* CURTIS'S *hand and slaps him on the back, and rushes toward* MRS. WOODWARD. *She, in alarm, gets behind the table.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

Look out! My hands are covered with flour.

[LUCIUS *dashes his hat on the floor, unwinds the "comforter" from his neck and dashes that on the floor.*

LUCIUS.

Durn me, but I'm glad to see you, Curtis, an' your good lady.

[LUCIUS *goes toward* CURTIS *to shake hands with him again.* CURTIS *holds his hands behind him.*

CURTIS.

Before we have another wrestling-match, suppose you tell me whom I have the pleasure of being mauled by ?

LUCIUS.

Hey ?

CURTIS.

Who are you ?

LUCIUS.

Why, I'm Lucius Peck !

CURTIS.

Lucius !

LUCIUS.

Curt !

[*They shake hands warmly.* CURTIS *puts on silk hat and* MRS. WOODWARD *comes forward and takes it off his head.*

CURTIS.

Gimme it, an' I'll kick a hole through the top ! I'm a boy again, sure enough ! Hooray !

MRS. WOODWARD.

I know, but you won't be one any longer when you start for home, and you'll need a decent hat to go with.

[*Exit* MRS. WOODWARD *at right-hand door.*

LUCIUS.

Wal, wal! But I'm glad to see you an' your good lady—said that once or twice before, hain't I?

CURTIS.

Say it again, if you've a mind to, Lucius. It sounds good to hear you.

LUCIUS.

Folks all well? Where's the youngsters, an' the English lord Kizzie Kimander was a-blowin' about? Trot out the English lord, Curt, an' let's have a look at the critter.

CURTIS.

Lord Bunn ain't with us, Lucius, nor the children neither.

LUCIUS.

Wal, sir! I'm disappointed. But I'm glad to see you—durn it, that's the third time I've said it. Ye'll git to believe it presently.

CURTIS.

I *know* it, Lucius.

LUCIUS.

Gosh all hemlock! To think you're the young sprig used to help me 'tend father's store. Remember it, Curt? Mine now. Even the cracker-barrel ain't been moved an inch. Ha, ha! Seems like only a year ago. But the folks ain't forgotten ye. 'Tain't every day we git a home-made millionaire in our midst, an' we've arranged a programme to welcome ye.

CURTIS.

Arranged a programme!

LUCIUS.

Yessir! First, you've been appointed Sheriff. Sheriff Mounthooley's jest been charged with malfeasance in office, misfeasance in office, nonfeasance in office, an' a few more feasances, in an' *out* of office. He's suspended, an' durin' the interim you've been appointed Sheriff over the telephone by the Governor, at my request. An' here's the pie-plate goes with it.

[*Produces large shield, which he pins on* CURTIS'S *left breast.*

CURTIS.

But I don't live here, and ——

LUCIUS.

Oh, pshaw! I seen ahead every objection you could make, an' all's been attended to. The Governor says you're Sheriff, an' Sheriff you be. Don't say another word, but start in on the job.

CURTIS.

Well, I swear! And we think we are some swift down in New York!

LUCIUS.

It's only for a few days, an' ef we kin stand you, you ought to be able to stand us. Ha, ha! In a week or so Mounthooley'll be either acquitted or sent to jail. Then we'll have a permanent Sheriff. Besides [*persuasively*], in a week you may be in jail yourself. Sheriffs often is. They lead a precarious life.

CURTIS.

And this is a compliment?

LUCIUS.

Think of the glory, man! Compliment? Biggest goin'—but one, an' that one the boys has authorized me to offer you. Formal initiation to-night.

CURTIS.

Say, Lucius, I ain't a hog. I don't want to start supper afore I git up from dinner.

LUCIUS.

Wait till you hear what it is! [*Takes a big breath and throws out his chest.*] You've been elected captain of the Staceyville Mutual Protective Association's Combined Hook-an'-Ladder, Hose-Cart an' Chemical Engine Company Number One. Only one they is. Gotter be Number One! Ha, ha! An' here's your star. [*He pins a large shield on* CURTIS'S *right breast.* CURTIS *makes a gesture of despair.*] An' for your wife, she's been chose unanimous several things, an' she'll be initiated same time as you.

CURTIS.

Lucius, I don't know how Dolly'll take that. You see ——

LUCIUS.

Oh, don't thank *me!* I'm only the herald of good news. [*Draws paper from his pocket and reads.*] Here's what she's been elected: President Staceyville Dorcas Society Number One; Third Vice-President Staceyville Women's Temperance Union Number One; Correspondin' Sekketary Mothers' Circle Number One. All Number Ones. Only ones they is. Gotter be Number Ones. Ha, ha! You understand?

CURTIS.

Well, most of it.

LUCIUS.

Kind of overpowered by the granjeur of it, eh? Needn't to say a word. I got a few more. [*Clears his throat.*

CURTIS.

Better chop it off as far as you've got, Lucius. She'll think over those for a starter.

LUCIUS.

Got a few more? No? Wal, we *want* you should realize how glad we are to see you—to welcome home one of the nation's most distinguished —— Oh, thunder! That's from the schoolmaster's speech for to-night. Jest popped out. You won't mention it?

CURTIS.

See here, Lucius. I came up here to rest—not to go out chasing dirty tramps and rambling over the landscape yanking a hose-cart on the end of a clothes-line. Suppose I won't accept?

LUCIUS.

Tar an' feather ye ef ye don't. Local pride here is terrible strong. *Don't* say ye won't accept! Won't do ye no good to say so, anyhow. Wal, I must be goin'. I'm awfully glad [*shaking* CURTIS'S *hand*]—blest ef I ain't wound up agin! Ha, ha! Wal, good-bye.

Tell your good lady I am her most obedient. [*Goes toward left-hand door, winding his "comforter" about his neck. Suddenly stops and addresses* CURTIS.] How is it Peter didn't come up with you?

CURTIS.

What Peter?

LUCIUS.

Peter—your big boy Peter. When he left here last fall ——

CURTIS.

Sho! My boy Peter ain't never been up here!

LUCIUS.

Wal, there was a prime young fellow up here last fall, said he was your son. Reg'lar dawg fer huntin', an' talked about as much as an extra-sized bag o' flour.

CURTIS.

That *sounds* like Peter!

LUCIUS.

Sure it was Peter. Went gunnin' many's the time with me an' Kizzie's brother Seth. You don't mean to say he didn't give you all the good wishes we sent you? By ginger

spreuce! I knowed he was economical of words, but—hey! Mebbe I'm tellin' tales out of office-hours?

CURTIS.

Oh, no! Yes, yes! Of course! All my forgetfulness.

LUCIUS.

[*Suspiciously.*] You've got a mighty wabbly memory, Curt. Wal, how *is* Peter?

[*Draws on his gloves.*

CURTIS.

Oh, fair to middling—eatin' more an' sayin' less every day.

LUCIUS.

Pity he didn't come up. [*Preparing to leave.*] Don't say nothin' to the schoolmaster about that sample from his speech, will ye? Ha, ha!

[*Exit* LUCIUS, *left-hand door.* CURTIS *remains in thought for a moment. Then he goes to right-hand door and calls.*

CURTIS.

Dolly! Oh, Dolly!

[MRS. WOODWARD *reënters.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

I thought you might be more comfortable with your old friend if I weren't here, Curtis.

CURTIS.

[*Absent-mindedly.*] Yes, yes!

MRS. WOODWARD.

And what are these extraordinary decorations? [*She looks at badges.*

CURTIS.

[*Going toward left-hand door.*] I'll tell you later. I've got something else to think of just now. [*Calls out at door.*] Lucius! Hey, Lucius! [*Makes gesture showing that* LUCIUS *does not hear.*] I want to see Lucius about something I—er—overlooked. Do you mind if I step down to the store for a minute?

[CURTIS *puts on his hat and overcoat.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

Do, do, Curtis. And don't bother to hurry back. It seems as if we had all time and eternity here. [*Exit* CURTIS, *at left-hand door.* MRS. WOODWARD *waves farewell at door, stands watching him a moment, and returns to her work at table. Knock heard at rear door. As* MRS. WOODWARD *opens it, enter* PETER, LORD BUNN *and* RUTH, RUTH *being hidden behind*

the others. PETER *is a rather stout young man, with an indomitably smiling and good-natured face. He has a "comforter" wound about his neck.*] Peter! Lord Bunn! [*As* MRS. WOODWARD *advances with her hands out,* PETER *gives her the end of the "comforter" and as she holds it* PETER *unwinds himself from its folds by turning around. Then he and* LORD BUNN *fall apart, revealing* RUTH. MRS. WOODWARD, *taking* RUTH *in her arms.*] Why, Ruth! [RUTH *kisses* MRS. WOODWARD *and throws her arms about her.*] Why, Lord Bunn! Why, Peter! Where in the world did you spring from?

PETER.

[*Taking* MRS. WOODWARD *by the arm, leading her to rear door, opening door, pointing out mysteriously, and closing door softly.*] Sh!

MRS. WOODWARD.

Don't be silly, Peter! What possessed you to come here after us?

RUTH.

[*Taking off her hat.*] Oh, what a lovely, quaint old place! We got so lonesome without you, Mother dear, and of course I couldn't stay alone when Peter made up his mind to come. He said you'd probably be making some im-

portant discoveries, and in case you should he wanted to be on the ground to help you make them.

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Seating herself.*] How absurd! Well, we've made a few already.

PETER.

Kizzie?

MRS. WOODWARD.

What! Has your father been telling you about Miss Kizzie? That's singular, when he had nearly forgotten her. I know her very well already.

PETER.

[*As if about to make a long confidential communication, bringing a chair, setting it down facing* MRS. WOODWARD *and sitting.*] And others?

MRS. WOODWARD.

Oh, surely, not many others *yet*, Peter!

RUTH.

So don't be angry, Mother ——

MRS. WOODWARD.

Angry, my child? I'm delighted.

RUTH.

And I hope Father won't be. We came near bringing Dawson and Jane with us, but Peter said that a butler and a maid would be out of place in the simple life of Staceyville.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Dawson! I'm glad you didn't. I shouldn't sleep if I didn't know that Dawson was looking after the house. Really, I'm glad now you came. I had an idea I'd like to ask you to come with us in the first place, and I think your father felt that way too. He'll be very much pleased to see you when he comes in, you may be sure. I dare say we should have been boring ourselves to death in two days.

PETER.

[*Holding up his hand for silence, and apparently going to make a long and important speech.*] Two weeks.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Two weeks?

RUTH.

The conductor told us our train would be the last through in several days—the worst storm in five years.

LORD BUNN.

I presume I may be allowed to say a word about *my* presence?

MRS. WOODWARD.

I do not press you, Lord Bunn. I am very glad indeed to see you, with or without a reason. You don't mind if I go on with my work? I've been so interrupted that I declare it will never be done. [MRS. WOODWARD *goes to table. During the ensuing dialogue* RUTH *is standing at the side of* MRS. WOODWARD *and a little to the back of her, and evidently takes a great deal of interest in what* LORD BUNN *is saying. She smiles at him, clasps her hands encouragingly, etc. She helps her mother in a desultory way, handing her the wrong articles, etc.* PETER *is sitting by stove, reading the country paper, smiling to himself, laughing aloud, and occasionally slapping his knee and ejaculating.*] We thought you were in England?

LORD BUNN.

So I was. Only got back yesterday. You see, I had a matter of business with Mr. Woodward, and a minute's talk is better than no end of telegrams.

PETER.

[*Reading.*] Buster!

[MRS. WOODWARD *and* LORD BUNN *turn to look at* PETER, *who reads on unconsciously.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

It was important and urgent, Lord Bunn?

LORD BUNN.

Important? Well, rather. And urgent? Why, do you know [*laughing*] I didn't even stop to act as best man in a runaway match of a friend of mine. Think what a novelty to miss! Best man in an elopement!

RUTH.

Oh, how romantic! Who were they?

LORD BUNN.

Ah, no! That would hardly be fair. You *might* know them, and they may not have succeeded in carrying it off.

RUTH.

I might know them? Oh, do tell, please! I'm a regular gourmand for gossip.

LORD BUNN.

No, no; really ——

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*To* RUTH.] Don't tease Lord Bunn about such a thing, Ruth. Of course he's right. You were saying, Lord Bunn?

LORD BUNN.

[*Lamely, as* RUTH *turns away pouting.*] Well, then—er—er—there were *other* matters, er—er ——

PETER.

Ur, ur!

[*Same business as before by* MRS. WOODWARD, LORD BUNN *and* PETER.

LORD BUNN.

Er—yes! Other matters—another matter, rather. [*He glances at* RUTH, *rouses himself, and starts off briskly.*] You see, the unprecedented stringency in the money market—that is, the uncommon ease with which money may be borrowed—er—er ——

PETER.

[*As before.*] Going *some!*

MRS. WOODWARD.

Lord Bunn, I've no head for business, you know, and this will all have to be explained over again to Mr. Woodward ——

LORD BUNN.

I'm afraid I'm making a poor hand at it. The journey and the voyage must have upset me a little. I can put it quite clearly to you to-morrow. In brief, I wanted to see him—you —Mr. Woodward—on very, *very* important business [*glancing at* RUTH, *who clasps her hands delightedly and smiles at him*], and I just happened—you see, the train I took, as it chanced—er ——

MRS. WOODWARD.

I see! Remarkable coincidence, wasn't it?

PETER.

Bunn, you take a rest, add yourself up, and tell us the answer when you get it. [LORD BUNN *rises and makes dumb show as if expostulating with* RUTH. *She rather snubs him.* PETER, *looking up from his paper and nodding his head to indicate* LORD BUNN.] Orator!

MRS. WOODWARD.

Better have your luggage sent up here, Lord Bunn. You'll stay with us, of course?

LORD BUNN.

[*Looking apprehensively at* RUTH, *who still has her nose turned up at him.*] Oh, but really, I couldn't intrude. I'll go to the hotel. I

suppose there *is* a hotel. I *hope* there's a hotel —— [*Looks appealingly at* RUTH, *who keeps silence.*] I'll send your luggage up, Peter, if you say so?

PETER.

Do, that's a good fellow.

MRS. WOODWARD.

We shall see you this afternoon, Lord Bunn?

LORD BUNN.

[*Looking expectantly at* RUTH.] This afternoon? This afternoon? [RUTH *does not speak.*] Ah, yes. This afternoon. Till then, au revoir. [*Exit* LORD BUNN *at rear door.*

RUTH.

How provoking men can be when they really try!

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*After looking at* RUTH *keenly for a moment.*] Come, children, let me show you the house your father was born in. [RUTH *follows her to right-hand door.* PETER *does not move.*] You too, Peter.

PETER.

Old story to me.

[*Voice outside: "House ahoy!"* PETER *goes to rear door, opens door, and enter* FREDERICKA POMEROY.

FREDERICKA.

Well, Peter! You here? How are you?
[*Shaking hands with* PETER.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Peter!

FREDERICKA.

My efforts to make the acquaintance of your family have nearly been the death of me. That last drift was an ocean, and I almost foundered. [*Laughs easily.*] Your folks, Peter? Introduce me, like a good boy.

PETER.

[*With a grand sweep of the hand.*] Folks,—Miss Pomeroy!

FREDERICKA.

Folks? And who are the folks, Stupid?

PETER.

[*Indicating* MRS. WOODWARD, *who has gone beside table and is absent-mindedly handling bread-making tools.*] Mother.

FREDERICKA.

[*Offering to shake hands.*] Charmed. [MRS. WOODWARD *does not offer her hand, but bows stiffly.*] Oh, you don't want to doughy up my hands. Considerate!

PETER.

Sister—Ruth.

FREDERICKA.

[*Shaking hands with* RUTH.] I'll like you, my dear; I know I shall. [*A pause.*] Goodness! Won't somebody please say something? —*Any*thing?

MRS. WOODWARD.

Peter! Why, Peter! Do you know this young—person? Peter, answer me!

PETER.

Ahem! [*Enter* CURTIS *left-hand door.* PETER, *to* FREDERICKA, *indicating* CURTIS.] Father,—Miss Pomeroy.

FREDERICKA.

[*Shaking hands with* CURTIS.] Oh, you look so funny, frowning like that. Don't! Bad for the temper.

CURTIS.

[*Kissing* RUTH.] I heard you'd arrived, and I hurried back—[*to* PETER]—with a few stray items of news I picked up. It seems to me an explanation is due from you, sir!

FREDERICKA.

Due, and will go to protest if you wait to get it from Peter. *I'll* explain. Peter and I are engaged.

CURTIS.

I expected as much.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Merciful heavens! Peter! When?

FREDERICKA.

[*Holding up her hand.*] Now, wait! The parts are rather reversed, but you know Peter. I've got one of the best farms around here—own it free and clear. Five hundred and twenty-eight acres, seventy-four cows, eleven horses besides my saddle-horse. Nine men working for me regularly, and four maids. And I'm my own boss. People tell me I act like it.

CURTIS.

[*To* PETER.] What do you say to that, sir?

PETER.

Correct, I guess. Never counted 'em.

CURTIS.

The deuce, Peter! Is it serious? [PETER *solemnly nods his head.*] Peter, you'd never make a farmer. But if you'll come home with me, get into the bank, put your shoulder under the business, and keep this little place for a summer-home, I believe that girl may make something of you. If it's a bargain, I'll stand by you through thick and thin.

[PETER *shakes hands on it with* CURTIS.

MRS. WOODWARD.

My head's reeling. *When* was Peter ever here before?

FREDERICKA.

Why, last fall!

CURTIS.

When we thought him safe in Canada.

PETER.

Natural curiosity—birthplace of sire—good man, must be good place. Look it up.

MRS. WOODWARD.

You are not going to encourage this mésalliance, Curtis?

CURTIS.

If it's going to solve the riddle of getting Peter interested in anything, I'm willing to take a chance.

FREDERICKA.

You're disposing of me and my farm pretty coolly, I should say.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Oh, Curtis! How can you? [*To* FREDERICKA.] You see how ridiculous it is, don't you?

FREDERICKA.

You think I am not good enough for your son?

MRS. WOODWARD.

My *dear* young lady! You must not put words into my mouth. I'm sure ——

FREDERICKA.

No fencing. Either you do think so, or you do not.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Why, I don't know anything about you. What a strange ——

FREDERICKA.

You do *not* approve. Sir [*to* CURTIS], what do you say?

CURTIS.

I've just given my blessing to Peter, upon conditions, and I'm willing to give it to you.

FREDERICKA.

Wait! I don't want to go into any family where I'm not entirely welcome for myself alone. Did the gossips tell you all?

PETER.

[*Warningly.*] Thick and thin!

CURTIS.

Through thick and thin. But if there's anything particularly thick or particularly thin, let us have it now.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Curtis! Have you considered? We do not know whether the young lady's parents approve this step—we don't even *know* her parents!

FREDERICKA.

[*Calmly.*] I don't even know them myself.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Merciful heavens! [*Looks perplexedly from* CURTIS *to* FREDERICKA. *Then, to* RUTH.] Come, Ruth. I think you ought to lie down and take a nap after that long trip. I really do.

[*Exit* MRS. WOODWARD *and* RUTH, RUTH *last, at right-hand door.* RUTH *throws a kiss to* FREDERICKA *and* PETER, *who are standing at* L. C., *facing* RUTH, CURTIS *sitting with his back to* RUTH.

CURTIS.

Explanations seem to be the standing order of business to-day. It appears to be up to you, Miss Pomeroy.

FREDERICKA.

I think I have told you everything necessary.

CURTIS.

But that little point—you know—not knowing your parents,—you know ——

FREDERICKA.

Oh, that! My name, my full name, given to me by my foster-father, now dead, is Fredericka Front Porch Left Wright Pomeroy.

CURTIS.

Bless me! Peter'd side-step that at the very altar. "I, Peter, take thee, Fredericka Front-foot Hind-foot ——"

FREDERICKA.

Fredericka Front Porch Left Wright Pomeroy, if you please. My foster-father's name

was Wright Pomeroy. His housekeeper's name was Fredericka. She found me one morning in a basket on the front porch. You understand? Fredericka—sentimental, after the housekeeper; Wright Pomeroy—by adoption; Front Porch Left, descriptive. Fredericka Front Porch Left Wright Pomeroy. My life history in my name.

CURTIS.

[*Slowly.*] Fredericka—Front—Porch—Left—Wright—Pomeroy! And yet Shakespeare says, "What's in a name?" Peter, you see it's—it's —— [CURTIS *shakes his head.*

PETER.

See nothing!

CURTIS.

I know, I know, my boy. I must be brutally outspoken. The censure of the world—the scorn of the sneering multitude—[*rapidly*] and what will your mother say?

PETER.

Probably holler.

CURTIS.

Forgive me, my dear young lady. I don't want to hurt your feelings unnecessarily ——

[PETER *puts his arm around* FREDERICKA.

FREDERICKA.

Nothing you will say can hurt me if only Peter stands by me.

CURTIS.

Peter, listen to reason.

FREDERICKA.

[*Indignantly.*] Why, we've reasoned it all out together, haven't we, Peter? And let me tell you, Mr. Woodward, it was the best day's work your son ever did when he met me.

CURTIS.

I can't persuade you, my boy? You won't give her up?

PETER.

Would *you?*

CURTIS.

[*Rising.*] Nothing I can say will move you?

PETER.

No go.

CURTIS.

Then I'm not going to say anything.

[*Holds out his hands to them.*

FREDERICKA.

[*Throwing herself into his arms.*] Dad!

CURTIS.

So far as the head of the house goes, Peter, take her and be happy. What the foot of the house will say is another chapter.

[*Enter* MRS. WOODWARD, *at right-hand door. She goes straight to* CURTIS.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Curtis! You never, *never* have ——

CURTIS.

Well, my dear, I'm glad that somebody has been able to make Peter sit up and take notice. *I* never could.

[MRS. WOODWARD *looks at him appealingly. He fidgets, but plainly shows that he is not going to recede.* MRS. WOODWARD *sinks into chair covering her face with her hands.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

Oh, Peter, Peter!

PETER.

[*Going toward* MRS. WOODWARD.] Mother ——

MRS. WOODWARD.

Oh, Peter! *Oh*, Peter! How *could* you?

PETER.

Mother ——

MRS. WOODWARD.

No, no! Not if you don't give up that girl!

CURTIS.

[*Warningly.*] Dolly, Dolly!

MRS. WOODWARD.

Oh, I know I'm not acting as I should, but this is no situation for conventional politeness.

[FREDERICKA *has stood with her back to the stove, flicking her boot with whip she carries, apparently little moved by this scene. She now speaks to* MRS. WOODWARD.

FREDERICKA.

I have a decent pride as well as you, Mrs. Woodward. If I had listened to Peter last fall, we should have been married then. Is that so, Peter? [PETER *nods his head emphatically.*] So you see I don't really *need* to wait for your consent unless I choose. But I *do* choose. I'll never marry into a family that won't receive me without qualification. No "ifs" or "buts."

CURTIS.

Surely, your parents left some clue. A proper search ——

FREDERICKA.

Parents or no parents. Whoever they were, even if they were the highest and most respectable in the land, if I could put my hand on them to-morrow I wouldn't throw that much of a bribe to you. You'll accept me at my own valuation, or not at all. [*To* PETER, *who seems about to speak.*] Now, Peter, you know I've got a good bit of pig-headedness myself—never, *never!*

[FREDERICKA *prepares to go.* PETER *takes up his coat and begins to put it on.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

Peter!

FREDERICKA.

[*To* PETER.] Don't mind going home with me. It will be a hard trip back for you.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Peter! You *are* coming back?

FREDERICKA.

Coming back? Gracious! I should say so!

PETER.

Well, no.

FREDERICKA.

Nonsense! [PETER *stands immovable.* FREDERICKA, *clapping her hands.*] Oh, I've got an idea! [*To* PETER.] You come with me as my hired man. No sentiment. This is a business proposition. You go and get the team out of the shed and bring it up here. Hurry, now! [*Exit* PETER, *at left-hand door.* FREDERICKA, *giving* CURTIS *her hand.*] Good-bye, Dad! Oh, I know I shall just *love* you! [*To* MRS. WOODWARD.] Good-bye!

[FREDERICKA *turns to leave at left-hand door, and in going out she runs into* MISS KIMANDER, *who is entering with her hands full of telegrams.* FREDERICKA *follows her in.* MISS KIMANDER *stumbles and lets the telegrams drop on the floor. She grabs them up hastily and stumbles to* CURTIS.

MISS KIMANDER.

I've got an order from the New York Evening Palladium for two colyums of choice anecdote an' miscellany about you, Curt. [*Getting out*

note-book and pencil.] How old are you? What air your religious convictions?

[*She scribbles wildly.*

CURTIS.

[*Looking at* MISS KIMANDER *in astonishment, opening telegram and reading.*] "Awfully sorry for your trouble, old man. Call on me if I can help." [*Opens another.*] "Firm hard hit with news of your failure in Palladium. Trying to keep above water. Wire explanation or denial immediately. Perkins." My failure! in the Palladium! [*Looks fiercely at* MISS KIMANDER.] What—*what* have you been writing about me, woman?

MISS KIMANDER.

[*Nodding her head.*] Your failure—lost your money, you know—you told me ——

CURTIS.

[*Reading another telegram.*] "Condolences. Tell Mrs. W. to try sal volatile for attacks of convulsions."

MRS. WOODWARD.

Convulsions!

MISS KIMANDER.

When you hear beautiful poetry, you know! [MRS. WOODWARD *looks about in bewilder-*

ment.] Now, don't ye git excited! Don't ye! Don't ye! Remain ca'm! Remain ca'm!

CURTIS.

[*Opening and reading other telegrams.*] "Creditors in possession of house. What shall Jane and me do? Hope Mrs. W. is better from fits. Dawson." "Couldn't hold up against Transatlantic Securities. Get Lord Bunn to tell father to keep hands off. Otherwise everything going to smash. Perkins." So Lord Bunn's father's got to be in it, too. "Sorry to learn ——" What's this? Where's the rest of this telegram?

MISS KIMANDER.

Telegraph wires broke down while that was coming in. No gittin' news from New York for a week. But my article—my two colyums of choice anecdote an' miscellany'll be the first thing out when the wire's mended. [CURTIS *looks around wildly and then drops into a chair*, MRS. WOODWARD *kneeling beside him as if imploring him to hold himself together.*] Two colyums! Two colyums! What air your politics—where do you think this imperial nation's destiny lies? What was your favor*ite* hymn when a happy careless boy? Did you ever git fit by a wild beast? Is your daughter engaged to a Dook or a Barr'net?

Tell me all—tell me everything—and tell me quick!

[*As* MISS KIMANDER *makes these demands,* FREDERICKA *grabs her by the back of the neck and drags her toward rear door.* MISS KIMANDER *keeps her face toward* CURTIS, *asking her questions, and as she asks them the curtain falls.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*At* LUCIUS PECK'S *grocery store the next morning.*

CURTIS *and* LUCIUS *discovered,* CURTIS *sitting on a barrel,* L. C., *and* LUCIUS *packing a delivery basket. He is evidently loading the sleigh for delivery. During this scene he occasionally says "Whoa!" to horse supposed to be outside.*

LUCIUS.

Whoa, Bob! Heavy day ahead, with all this snow to plow through. Wisht there was less of it for your sake, Curt.

CURTIS.

I don't know as it matters much—now.

LUCIUS.

Sho! Wisht I *could* do something, Curt.

CURTIS.

It's impossible to get a messenger through?

LUCIUS.

Look outside an' tell me yourself. An' with all the wires down nobody could git a message

over the mountains now but a bird or a man on snow-shoes, an' there ain't a soul left in the village kin navigate the pesky things.

CURTIS.

I'd give ten thousand dollars for a man on snow-shoes.

LUCIUS.

Ten thousand! Whew! See what a mistake my father made teachin' me to sand sugar instead of to walk snow! Ha, ha! I'll see if I can't rouse some of the fellers out with that. Ten thousand dollars is big, but twenty-five mile over them mountains in this weather —wal, I'll see. [*Comes over to* CURTIS *and lays his hand on* CURTIS'S *shoulder.*] Curt, is it as bad as that?

CURTIS.

Just that bad.

LUCIUS.

I'd like to be able to take things as cool as you. Suppose I found my store burned down some morning without insurance—your case, about, ain't it?

CURTIS.

Yes; about that.

LUCIUS.

Wal, deacon or no deacon, I'd be liable to use some language celebratin' it.

CURTIS.

[*Cutting off a piece of cheese and holding it up on knife.*] Lucius, at about what age do you calculate it's proper to pension off a deservin' old cheese? This here one is purty nigh the veteran class, right now.

LUCIUS.

Ha, ha! It does me real good to see you keep up so. If you'll take it as it's meant, Curt, clerkin' in a grocery store for old fellows like you an' me ain't what it was for the young 'uns we was thirty years ago, but, Curt, there's always a place for you here, you know.

[*They clasp hands.*

CURTIS.

Lucius! Old friend!

LUCIUS.

Dang it, Curt, ye kin hev the store—the hull shootin'-match, an' I'll clerk it for you, an' you kin be boss, Curt, only say the word.

CURTIS.

Wal, I'll tend store for you whiles you're out, an' see how I git the hang of it, an' mebbe

you'll be sorry for the offer. Everything jest as it was in ancient times? Ginger here?

[*Walking around and pointing.*

LUCIUS.

Yes, yes!

CURTIS.

Prunes?

LUCIUS.

Yes, prunes.

CURTIS.

[*Walking around behind counter at right.*] Hoss-liniment there? Calico here?

LUCIUS.

Yes, yes, yes!

[CURTIS *pretends to be selling goods, unrolling calico, etc., when* MRS. WOODWARD *enters centre door. She walks toward him as he spreads out a piece of calico, and bends over it, not seeing her.*

CURTIS.

Very pretty pattern, ma'am. Fast? As a hitchin'-post. Run? Not if it seen the Angel Gabriel come tootin' down in a areyplane.

[*Looks up and sees* MRS. WOODWARD.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Goodness, Curtis! What *are* you doing?

CURTIS.

[*Coming out from behind the counter.*] Lucius has jest give me a job. Five a week, Lucius, I think you said, for a starter? [MRS. WOODWARD *sits in a chair near counter and begins to cry.* CURTIS, *patting her on the shoulder.*] Never mind my foolishness, Dolly. Do you think I don't feel our misfortune as keenly as you? Our honest independence, our hope of a tranquil old age, our pride in our children ——

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Taking* CURTIS'S *hand and looking up earnestly into his eyes.*] Curtis, I've sometimes been a peevish, complaining wife, but you've seen the last of *that* Dolly Woodward. If this affliction presses upon us, we will bear it together. I will devote myself to giving aid, and comfort, and cheer, and sympathy to my own dear old man, who's been so good to me all these years.

CURTIS.

And he needs it sorely now, Dolly. It's worth being poor again to hear you say that. My dear good wife!

[MRS. WOODWARD *rises and* CURTIS *clasps her in his arms.*

LUCIUS.

[*At left door.*] Whoa, consarn ye! Whoa!

[CURTIS *and* MRS. WOODWARD *move apart.* LUCIUS *comes toward them.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

I really forgot what I came for. I want two aprons, Mr. Peck.

LUCIUS.

[*Chuckling.*] Ask my clerk for 'em. [*Rubbing his hands.*] By ginger spreuce! 'Tain't everybody kin hev the Sheriff an' Fire Chief to work for 'em to oncet. Ha, ha! [*Exit* LUCIUS *left, laughing loudly. Outside.*] Whoa, there! *Now*, then, giddap, durn ye! Giddap!

[*Sound of sleigh-bells moving off outside.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

Curtis, I won't refer to it again; but just this once, let me ——

CURTIS.

[*Impatiently.*] I know —— [*Suddenly, with deference.*] Pardon me, my dear; I was getting hasty.

MRS. WOODWARD.

If Mr. Perkins says it's the Transatlantic Securities Corporation that is pushing you ——

CURTIS.

Dolly, can I afford, as a man, to kneel to Lord Bunn and get help from his father?

MRS. WOODWARD.

I don't urge it, Curtis.

CURTIS.

No, Mother. If we must fall, let us go down with self-respect. Oh, if I could only get five minutes on the telephone! [*Beginning to pace the floor.*] It makes me light-headed to think what I could do if I could only reach the office. [*Getting louder in his talk.*] And that old fossil, Perkins —— [MRS. WOODWARD *lays a restraining hand on his arm.*] You're right, my dear girl. I mustn't think of it. [*Looks at* MRS. WOODWARD *quizzically, and then takes her by both shoulders and looks straight into her eyes with a smile.*] There's something beyond that on your mind. Better get rid of it. Out with it!

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Gently disengaging herself.*] No, Curtis; you've answered that, too.

[MRS. WOODWARD *goes toward counter and feels absent-mindedly of the calico.* CURTIS *follows.*

CURTIS.

Now, Dolly, you wouldn't have me——

MRS. WOODWARD.

Come, Curtis! Don't let's think any more about it. Get me my aprons. [CURTIS *goes around behind counter.*] I must hurry back to cook dinner. Ruth's peeling the potatoes—just think! For the first time in her life!

CURTIS.

Ruth, now! You really imagine she likes Lord Bunn?

MRS. WOODWARD.

I've passed beyond imagining. I *know.*

CURTIS.

[*Measuring off and putting up calico.*] Humph!

[LORD BUNN, *passing outside window in rear, taps on it to draw their attention, and waves his hand gaily.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Hastily.*] There he is now, coming in. You'll treat him nicely, Curtis?

[*Enter* LORD BUNN.

LORD BUNN.

Good-morning; good-morning, Mrs. Woodward.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Good-morning, Lord Bunn. I was hoping I should see you so that I might invite you to dinner.

CURTIS.

[*To* LORD BUNN.] I forbid you to come—unless Mrs. Woodward makes a double supply of biscuits.

LORD BUNN.

If it will not be too much trouble, Mrs. Woodward?

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Laughing.*] I'll make a bushel, if necessary, but you shall both have enough. Oh, Curtis! My aprons!

[CURTIS *wraps them up and gives them to her.*

LORD BUNN.

At what hour, Mrs. Woodward?

MRS. WOODWARD.

Twelve, sharp, is the hour set by the Staceyville decree of fashion.

CURTIS.

And a blame good hour, too—mebbe eleven would be a mite better.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Well, I'll hurry the dinner, then, you poor hungry soul. Watch the gable window, and when you see the blue table-cover hung out you'll know dinner is ready.

[MRS. WOODWARD *gives* CURTIS *money, and moves toward centre door.*

CURTIS.

[*Coming out from behind counter, approaching* MRS. WOODWARD *and speaking earnestly.*] Hold on, Dolly. Show me the window. It'd be terrible if we made a mistake.

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Walking* CURTIS *to window at right and pointing.*] The window just above the tree. Remember [*moving toward door*], the blue table-cover, gentlemen.

CURTIS.

In the gable window. [*Exit* MRS. WOODWARD *at centre.*] Lord Bunn, there goes the best woman that ever trod a rag-carpet—or a Persian rug, either. You'd never think, to know that dear girl only in prosperity, how she can

shine out in adversity. If you could only see how staunch, and tender, and forgetful of self she's been since the calamity of yesterday! Not once even saying, "I told you so!" And when a woman can keep from saying "I told you so" to the unfortunate critter that's brought her to her knees—why, she gets about as near the angels as it's possible—or desirable. [*Seats himself on chair in front of counter.*] D'you know, Lord Bunn, the whole situation's farcical. Here that fool Kimander woman's put me on the brink of ruin with her confounded telegrams to her condemned newspaper, and me only twenty-five miles from help, and it's as far off as heaven. If I could get over that twenty-five miles, I'd save myself yet.

LORD BUNN.

Twenty-five miles doesn't seem so far.

CURTIS.

Not until you offer a fortune to any man here who will get over it. They balk, and they ought to know. I've got to sit tight like a woodchuck run into a stone-wall and wait for an engine to break through the drifts.

LORD BUNN.

And how long will that take?

CURTIS.

Three days, four days, they say.

LORD BUNN.

Oh, if it's only three or four days ——

CURTIS.

[*Laying his hand earnestly on* LORD BUNN'S *knee.*] And where shall I be in three days? [*Kissing his finger-tips and waving them.*] There! Lucius will give me a job in the store, Dolly will do her own washing, Peter's gone out already for a hired man, and Ruth—Ruth, Lord Bunn. That's beyond a jest.

LORD BUNN.

[*Eagerly.*] Oh, Ruth—Miss Woodward?

CURTIS.

Yes?

LORD BUNN.

I hope she is well this morning?

CURTIS.

Appeared to be.

LORD BUNN.

The—the journey has not upset her?

CURTIS.

Not so's't you could notice. She ate four sausages for breakfast and a pile of buckwheats as high as a flower-pot.

LORD BUNN.

You—you, sir; and you are feeling well?

CURTIS.

Never better, so far as health is concerned.

LORD BUNN.

I wanted to say, sir, about Miss—er, that is, *Mrs.* Woodward. I—that is—I hope—she's well?

CURTIS.

Didn't look sick a little while ago.

LORD BUNN.

Oh, no, no! Not at all! To be sure! . . . And Miss Ruth—er—I hope, sir—I trust you'll forgive me, but ——

CURTIS.

She is *quite* well, Lord Bunn.

LORD BUNN.

Mr. Woodward, you, sir—you ——

CURTIS.

We're all well. The hull family's well.

[*An embarrassing silence, while* LORD BUNN *sits tongue-tied, and* CURTIS *watches him narrowly.*

LORD BUNN.

Mr. Woodward, I've customarily nerve and self-command enough, but this—this ——

CURTIS.

This wholesale search for health is rather too much, eh? Oh, you forgot Peter. I assure you, on my honor, he's well, too.

LORD BUNN.

I know I'm making a fool of myself ——

CURTIS.

I didn't say you weren't.

LORD BUNN.

[*Rising and throwing back his shoulders.*] Mr. Woodward, what I'm trying to tell you—what I ——

CURTIS.

Steady, steady! There you go again!

LORD BUNN.

What do you suppose I crossed the ocean for and came away up here to see you about?

CURTIS.

Wanted to make sure I was well.

LORD BUNN.

The devil! No!

CURTIS.

Well, I'm real put out!

LORD BUNN.

Mr. Woodward, I want to ask your consent to my marriage with Miss Ruth.

CURTIS.

[*Rising and pacing the floor.*] I knew it was coming. I knew it! But Lordy! Somehow it's a shock when it does come. Lord Bunn, I don't think you can accuse me of having given you any encouragement?

LORD BUNN.

I accuse you quite to the contrary.

CURTIS.

Just so. [*Suspiciously.*] You haven't spoken to my daughter before speaking to me?

LORD BUNN.

[*Innocently.*] Oh, would that have been the proper way?

CURTIS.

[*Severely.*] No, sir. It would not have been the proper way. It appears to me, Lord Bunn, that you're up against a blind wall. There's no more to be said.

[*Enter* MISS KIMANDER, *centre, carrying a pail and a covered basket.*

LORD BUNN.

[*Eagerly.*] But there's plenty more to be said, and I'm going to say it.

[CURTIS *checks him by motioning toward* MISS KIMANDER, *who has set down her basket and pail at right, and has her note-book out.*

MISS KIMANDER.

[*Slipping note-book into her pocket, taking up pail and coming forward.*] Don't let me interrupt you gentlemen. I've just come for a quart of molasses.

[CURTIS *takes the pail and is about to start with it, when* LORD BUNN *speaks.*

LORD BUNN.

[*Taking pail and holding it gingerly from him with thumb and finger.*] Let *me* get it for you.

CURTIS.

All right. Furthest barrel beyond ye on the right as ye git to the bottom of the stairs. [*Marking place on pail with finger.*] About to there, I should jedge, would be a quart.

MISS KIMANDER.

And while you're gone I'll read Curt a few stanzas of my poem—my masterpiece—"Ashes of Roses."

[*She looks languishingly at* CURTIS.

CURTIS.

[*Running to* LORD BUNN *and taking pail.*] Here, let *me* go! I'd rather draw freezin' molasses any day than listen to red-hot poetry.

[CURTIS *goes out cellar door, chuckling.*

MISS KIMANDER.

[*Unfolding poetry and beginning to read.*] Hem! "When you and I were young and our love like a crimson rose unfolded ——"

LORD BUNN.

Oh, Miss Kimander! I don't think I'm a good judge of poetry.

MISS KIMANDER.

[*Loftily.*] Young man, this here poetry is writ so's anybody kin enjoy it—even a lord. Hem! "When you and I were young ——"

LORD BUNN.

Listen! Did you hear a noise? I think Mr. Woodward has fallen and hurt himself. I'll go see! [*He starts toward cellar.*

MISS KIMANDER.

Stop, Lord Bunn! I have need of you!

LORD BUNN.

But maybe Mr. Woodward needs me more.

MISS KIMANDER.

I want to ask a favor of you.

LORD BUNN.

I say! No more poetry, you know!

MISS KIMANDER.

Oh,—no poetry; though you don't realize what you're a-missin'. No! Jest give me a colyum interview to send to the New York Evening Palladium—choice anecdote an' miscellany about Curt an' his family. They're *crazy* to git it.

LORD BUNN.

My dear madam! Even if I wished to and were able to, how could you send it? It would be labor wasted.

MISS KIMANDER.

How's that?

LORD BUNN.

Why, no one can get out of Staceyville.

MISS KIMANDER.

Never you worry about that. I'll get my story out. Don't you mind.

LORD BUNN.

But I *do* mind.

MISS KIMANDER.

See here. Will you give me the interview if I tell you?

LORD BUNN.

Tell me first ——

MISS KIMANDER.

No, sirree! Cash before delivery is my motto.

LORD BUNN.

If you'll tell me how I can get a message out of Staceyville to-day, I'll let you print anything you like about *me!*

MISS KIMANDER.

Mercy! About you? A real live lord? It's a bargain.

[MISS KIMANDER *brings forward the covered basket and lifts lid.* LORD BUNN *looks in.*

LORD BUNN.

Pigeons!

MISS KIMANDER.

Carrier-pigeons. There's only them two left. I've let off a flock to-day with three colyums of choice ——

LORD BUNN.

And how much should you expect to get for what these two birds will carry?

MISS KIMANDER.

Well, maybe ten dollars.

LORD BUNN.

I'll give you a hundred for them, if you'll say nothing to anybody about it.

[CURTIS *pokes his head through cellar door.*

CURTIS.

Are you finished with the poetry? If ye ain't, I'll go down-cellar an' draw another quart.

LORD BUNN.

You're perfectly safe now. [*To* MISS KIMANDER, *giving her money.*] There!

[*Enter* CURTIS.

MISS KIMANDER.

[*To* LORD BUNN.] And my interview with you—my two colyums of choice anecdote an' miscellany?

LORD BUNN.

Make it up as you go along. I'll bet it will be about as truthful and intelligent as the ones they *do* sometimes print. Anything, *any*thing! I'll stand for it.

MISS KIMANDER.

As intelligent, an' *as* true! Wait until you read it, that's all!

[CURTIS *gives her tin pail.*

LORD BUNN.

[*Pushing* MISS KIMANDER *toward door.*] There, there! Run along! Print anything! Say I'm a reformed pirate, or a professional Hindoo poker-player—that I was born on the tail of a comet, or in an air-ship—anything! *Any*thing! Only go!

CURTIS.

Lord Bunn! Lord Bunn! Come here a moment. Come quick!

LORD BUNN.

[*Advancing toward* CURTIS, *who is looking out of window at right.*] What is it?

CURTIS.

Isn't that a table-cover waving from the gable window?

[CURTIS *puts on his overcoat and hat.*

LORD BUNN.

No, that's only the shutter swinging.

CURTIS.

Sure?

LORD BUNN.

No doubt about it.

CURTIS.

Well, it'd be terrible to miss it.

[CURTIS *takes off overcoat and hangs up hat. During this dialogue* MISS KIMANDER *has stealthily crept back to cellar door, entered cellar, and closed door after her.*

LORD BUNN.

Mr. Woodward ——

CURTIS.

Wait. Just a second. Are you *certain* that isn't a table-cover ?

LORD BUNN.

Quite certain.

CURTIS.

Well, go on. I'm awfully disappointed, though.

LORD BUNN.

I had the honor to make you a proposal a short time ago ——

CURTIS.

Yes. I had the honor to hear it. Lord Bunn, I've a hundred good objections. The first is that you haven't spoken to my daughter. You've gone about it in the good old English way—oh, perfectly proper ——

LORD BUNN.

But, I assure you, if that's the only objection ——

CURTIS.

Not at all. Once your father and I, as you must know ——

LORD BUNN.

Wasn't that a perfectly legitimate business deal? And besides I thought the wrangle was amicably adjusting itself.

CURTIS.

Oh, I don't mean that. I haven't a whimper to make. No, no! At the same time, I've got a proper look into your father's character. I couldn't have my girl going into a family that's too proud to receive her.

LORD BUNN.

That's just what I'm here for. I have his blessing and his consent.

CURTIS.

You were a *leetle* hasty about getting the consent, but the blessing won't hurt you a mite. Your father thought my Ruth was the daughter of a rich man—so she was. But would he give his consent under the present circumstances? You needn't speak. I know. Finally, and here's the clincher—Ruth's engaged to young Valentine Quincy, son of Blast-Furnace Quincy, the steel man. *There's* a family to welcome her with only an extra gingham gown for all her dowry.

LORD BUNN.

Engaged! To Valentine Quincy! Engaged! She never —— [*Pauses suddenly.*

CURTIS.

Well?

LORD BUNN.

I have never heard Miss Woodward say anything that would lead me to believe she was engaged.

CURTIS.

Why should she? You wouldn't expect her to shout it from the housetops? Your proposition is hopeless. You're offering me a cold-blooded matrimonial arrangement with a girl to whom you've never given a hint of your sentiments, a girl that wouldn't be received by your family, and a girl that's already promised to another man.

LORD BUNN.

But if I am willing to take my chances with Mr. Quincy ——

CURTIS.

Lord Bunn, you are forgetting yourself. Let's change a painful subject. Talk of anything else—weather, crops, politics, business—no, not business. I haven't any business, or won't have

by to-morrow. Let's talk dinner. [*Going to window.*] Seems to me it's about time that table-cover got into action.

LORD BUNN.

Mr. Woodward, suppose you could send word to your partner? Suppose I could reach my father ——

CURTIS.

No, no! I will ask no favors from you or from him.

LORD BUNN.

I'm talking cold business. I suppose you could arrange for good security on a loan?

CURTIS.

[*Eagerly.*] Lord Bunn, if I could only lay hands on a telephone, I could produce security that the Bank of England wouldn't shy at. If I could only start the telegraph ticking, I'd save myself in spite of that old idiot Perkins. [*Impressively tapping* LORD BUNN *on the chest.*] Give me a hundred words on the wire, and I'll raise up twenty thousand dollars with every word. A hundred words! But what's the use of talking?

LORD BUNN.

Write me your hundred words and I'll get them on the wire at Loon Station.

CURTIS.

Have you found a telephone working?

LORD BUNN.

No.

CURTIS.

Then how'll you reach Loon Station, eh?

LORD BUNN.

Under the circumstances, that's a question with few answers.

CURTIS.

Only two. I know 'em by heart—only a bird or a man on snow-shoes.

LORD BUNN.

Only a man on snow-shoes—or a bird.

CURTIS.

[*Eagerly.*] You have found a snow-shoe man?

LORD BUNN.

No, but I've found a—that is, you know I never like to brag about my accomplishments, and I believe I never told you I learned snow-shoeing when a boy in Canada?

CURTIS.

No, sir. You certainly never did. I'm really surprised to hear it *now*.

LORD BUNN.

[*Picking up basket with pigeons and laying it on counter.*] Oh, I know a few other things that would surprise you, too. As you say, I never told you I could walk on snow-shoes.

CURTIS.

Never, I assure you. You're resolved to go?

LORD BUNN.

I've got some business of my own to attend to, and your telegram won't be any extra weight —that is, not much, you know.

CURTIS.

[*Sitting down at counter, drawing writing materials toward him and beginning to write.*] I'm profoundly grateful, of course.

LORD BUNN.

I may give you a chance to show your gratitude.

CURTIS.

[*Rising and tearing up paper he has been writing on.*] That's enough. Not to save my fortune would I sell my girl's happiness.

LORD BUNN.

Well, well! Let me go without thought of reward. Give me the telegram. This is simply a matter between good fellows.

CURTIS.

[*Sitting down again to write.*] There's no personal obligation binding on me in that direction?

LORD BUNN.

None whatever.

CURTIS.

And you'll telegraph your father not to press the Transatlantic Securities loan—your proposition, you know?

LORD BUNN.

My propo —— Oh, yes! Mine altogether, of course!

[CURTIS *gives* LORD BUNN *paper, which he puts in his pocket.*

LORD BUNN.

All correct, Mr. Woodward. I'm going down to Seth Kimander's to fix up the snow-shoes—or the bird, you know. Ha, ha!

[*As* LORD BUNN *goes toward centre door, a snore is heard from the cellar.* LORD BUNN *turns suddenly, and both speak at once.*

CURTIS.

Did you speak?

LORD BUNN.

What did you say?

BOTH.

No, no; nothing!

CURTIS.

I feel some compunction ——

LORD BUNN.

Don't. Really isn't worth while.

[LORD BUNN *picks up the basket with the pigeons.*

CURTIS.

That's right. Take her back her basket. I don't harbor any petty spite against the fool critter.

LORD BUNN.

Good-bye!

[*Exit* LORD BUNN, *centre.* CURTIS *stands a moment watching him, and then comes in and closes the door. Stands irresolute. Goes to door, then back again. Finally goes to door, opens it, and calls, very faintly.*

CURTIS.

Lord Bunn. Come back. Come back. [*Shuts door and returns.*] Well, I've done my best. Lord knows I called him back. [*Irresolute again.*] Oh, pshaw! I'm not going to have a fit of hysterics! [*Snore from cellar.* CURTIS *goes to cellar door, opens it, and calls.*] Kitty! Kitty! Come, Puss! Come out of that!

[*No cat appearing,* CURTIS *shuts cellar door. Enter* RUTH, *centre door.*

RUTH.

Why, Father! Does storekeeping take away your appetite? The signal for you and Lord Bunn has been waving for ten minutes. Where *is* Lord Bunn?

CURTIS.

He was just about going on an errand. I'll see if I can't get him. Might as well have dinner before he starts.

RUTH.

Starts? For where, in this place and in this weather?

CURTIS.

Yes; that's so, ain't it? See here, Ruth. You just keep an eye on the store while I'm gone.

RUTH.

[*Clasping her hands.*] Father, my fondest dream when I was a little girl was to keep a country store and have unlimited ginger-snaps and peppermint-sticks. And now here's my dream come true, and I don't dare take advantage of it—because I'd spoil my appetite. [*Laughs.*] Don't be gone long, Father.

CURTIS.

No, no! Back directly.

[*Exit* CURTIS, *left.* RUTH *takes up jar of peppermint-sticks, holds it to the light in her left hand, clasps her right hand across her bosom in mock admiration and longing, and then, with a laugh and a shake of her head, she replaces the jar on the shelf. Enter* PETER, *centre, followed by* FREDERICKA. FREDERICKA *pauses at the door and calls back over her shoulder.*

FREDERICKA.

Drive right along to the mill. Get the oats and come back here for me. Understand? Lively, now! [*She enters and shuts door.*

RUTH.

Oh, Peter!

PETER.

[*Kissing her.*] Heigho, Baby!

RUTH.

Miss Pomeroy, I hope you didn't think I was rude to you yesterday?

FREDERICKA.

Rude? You couldn't be rude if you tried. Will you let me kiss you, dear?

RUTH.

Willingly! [*They embrace.*

FREDERICKA.

Well, I'm glad *some* of your folks are human, Peter. And I *do* think I'd get along famously with your father. My! That narrows down the inhuman ones pretty fine, doesn't it? [*To* RUTH.] Never mind, my dear. Your mother is probably right as she sees it—only we are wearing different spectacles. Where's Mr. Woodward? I've a precious charge to give into his keeping.

[CURTIS *enters from left very hastily, but softly, looking back of him and closing door carefully.*

CURTIS.

Well, well!

RUTH.

Didn't you find him, Father?

CURTIS.

[*Still looking toward door.*] No, he found me—was laying for me just outside, apparently. But I think I've lost him.

RUTH.

Lost Lord Bunn?

CURTIS.

No, no! Not Lord Bunn. How are you, Peter, my boy? Miss Pomeroy? It's a crazy old fellow who insists upon giving me the hotel down the road. This *is the* blamedest place for gittin' presented with things.

[*Mechanically fixes* SHERIFF'S *badge.*

FREDERICKA.

Mr. Woodward, I want to give you ——

CURTIS.

I won't have it. I don't care what it is. I'll go to jail before I'll take another thing in this town.

FREDERICKA.

He isn't an it—it's a him! It's Peter!

RUTH.

Do you really mean you've given up Peter?

FREDERICKA.

[*Swinging up on to counter.*] We've given each other up.

CURTIS.

Now, I call that sense.

RUTH.

Oh, Mother will be so glad—but I'm sorry.

FREDERICKA.

You needn't waste any sympathy on us. I've done with Peter in a business way. I've discharged him.

PETER.

Bounced from only job I ever had.

FREDERICKA.

You see, Peter can eat more than he's worth. Of course, he has a few little objections on his side.

PETER.

Sleep in cold attic. Get up four o'clock. Butler for ten fat cows. Ugh!

FREDERICKA.

The fact is, Peter as a hired man is simply impossible, and for a boss, well, maybe I'm—a little difficult.

PETER.

Rotten!

FREDERICKA.

But as a husband, I think Peter will do. And he says that merely as a wife I shall be—maybe ——

PETER.

O. K.

FREDERICKA.

I'd rather lose everything I have than lose Peter. And though I won't marry into a family that won't have me unless I can furnish at least two respectable parents, I'll wait for Peter until the end of time.

PETER.

Long wait.

FREDERICKA.

Peter is my ideal of a husband. Most women object to a man fussing around in the kitchen. Now, *I* should object to a man fussing around my farm. There'd be trouble right away. I'm firmly convinced Peter won't get obnoxiously energetic. And really, I think a heap of him.

CURTIS.

It's no use ——

FREDERICKA.

Oh, that isn't what I came for. As my hired man, Peter could stay at the farm. Discharged, of course, he can't. You keep a stiff upper lip, Peter. Don't say a word ——

CURTIS.

He won't if he can help it.

FREDERICKA.

We'll hope your mother's hard heart will melt. Peter, do step to the door and see if that lazy fellow is coming back from the mill. Dear, dear! They talk of the servant-girl problem! If they only knew what we poor women have to put up with in the hired-man line! And I tell you what, Pa Woodward —— Now, don't look shocked. If you're going to know me any length of time you must be prepared to get electrified often, and hard—and sudden! Eh, Peter? I lack repose. I lack a good many things, and repose is one of them. But I'm getting fond of you, and if you improve on acquaintance, I'm going to adopt you as my father, whether you become my real father-in-law or not.

CURTIS.

Adopted! Heavens!

FREDERICKA.

You're an orphan, aren't you? Everybody knows that the first one to say "tag" to an orphan can adopt it. Don't worry about it any longer. I *like* you!

CURTIS.

This beats all! Here I'm Sheriff against my will, Chief of the Fire Department in spite of myself, and adopted as a father without a word to say about it! [*Enter* O. B. JACKSON.] There's my maniac. Here, you, just take your old hotel somewhere else. *I* don't want it.

JACKSON.

Mornin', young sir. Mornin', young madam. Mornin', Miss Fredericka.

FREDERICKA.

Oh, let me introduce you. This, Mr. Woodward, is Mr. O. B. Jackson, known to me and known to be generally the richest man in town, and the meanest, and proud of both titles.

JACKSON.

Don't ye go to callin' me names, young miss. I'll not have it.

FREDERICKA.

I'm not calling you names. I'm simply relating a fact—just as I should say, "This is the

coldest day in the year," "This is the only store in the village," so I say, "This is the meanest man in Staceyville," and you can't deny it.

JACKSON.

[*Whiningly.*] Because I want what's mine be rights, everybody abuses me.

FREDERICKA.

Truth is not abuse. I believe if you had a family you'd sell them for a dollar. Sell them? You'd pay a dime to have them kidnapped!

CURTIS.

I don't seem to remember you, Mr. Jackson. Can't place you.

FREDERICKA.

O. B.'s a stranger in town, Sheriff. Been here only twenty years or so.

[FREDERICKA *joins* PETER *and* RUTH *at centre door, and beckons to a far-away teamster, who evidently does not see her. She stamps her foot impatiently and reënters, closing door. Meanwhile*

JACKSON.

I've seed lots of folks run from Sheriffs, but you're the only Sheriff I ever seed run from folks. I tell ye I got a job for ye.

CURTIS.

A job? I've got too many jobs now, I have.

JACKSON.

[*Producing papers.*] You knowed it, or you wouldn't 'a' run. I tell you I got an attachment agin the Eagle Hotel, an' I want you should seize it for me.

CURTIS.

Now, now, now, Mr. O. B. Jackson! Can't you see I've got my hands full running this store?

JACKSON.

The store's an individual concern. This thing here [*tapping papers*] is the majesty of the law.

CURTIS.

I want to state right now, if I've forgotten to mention it before, that this is the *durndest* spot for gittin' things handed out to you that you don't want and don't know how to let go of.

FREDERICKA.

[*Advancing to* CURTIS *and taking paper from his hand.*] Attaching the hotel again, O. B.? It's a regular habit with him, Sheriff. He does it every so often.

JACKSON.

I only want what's me own.

FREDERICKA.

You'll have a perfectly lovely time, Sheriff. The last one that seized it resigned because the boarders insisted on staying the week out and he had to run the hotel for them. I'll drop over and see how you're getting along and help you with the dishes—for the servants will board, too, to work out their wages. That's the way it usually goes, doesn't it, O. B.?

JACKSON.

Wal, most ginerally.

CURTIS.

I won't do it. I set my foot down ——

JACKSON.

Oh, very well! There's a law expressly provided for Sheriffs that refuse their duty. There's a law for that!

[*Enter* SETH KIMANDER, *centre, carrying a gun.*

FREDERICKA.

Go down and see the Justice of the Peace, Sheriff, and find out if you can't shake it off.

CURTIS.

That might be a good idea in any town but this. I'll try it, but I believe things here can't *be* shook. [*Advancing to left door and pausing.*] What did Lucius Peck say—that I'd probably be in jail in a week! [*Exit* CURTIS *at left.*

JACKSON.

Everybody's agin me, jest because I want my dues. [*Talking disgustedly at* SETH.] Yah! There's another of 'em now! [*Dances in front of* SETH, *shaking his finger under* SETH'S *nose.*] Don't you go for to deny it! Don't ye dare, Seth Kimander!

SETH.

[*Undisturbed.*] Mebbe I won't ef you tell me what 'tis, an' mebbe I will. Anybody seen Sister Kizzie round lately? She ain't come home yit. [*Snore from cellar.*

JACKSON.

Where's that six dollars an' forty cents, an' eight months' interest you owe me? When are you goin' to pay me, hey?

FREDERICKA.

Don't you ever think of anything but dollars and cents, O. B.?

SETH.

[*Feeling in his pocket.*] I'm a-goin' to pay ye now.

JACKSON.

[*Taken aback.*] Now? Huh! Now?

SETH.

Ya-as, *now*. I'm a-goin' to discharge this debt of six dollars an' forty cents by givin' you as good a swarm o' bees as they is in the woods, an' the interest will begin to commence when you try to git 'em into a hive.

JACKSON.

Bees! You'll pay me in bees? You'll pay me in cash. I refuse to take bees in payment of my six dollars an' forty cents an' eight months' interest.

SETH.

The interest's liable to last ye more'n eight months ef ye don't handle 'em light. Here's one I brung ye for a sample. [*Tenders bee to* JACKSON, *who draws back.*] Thunder! Ye needn't be so scairt. He's friz tight. Can't work his stinger till he's thawed out. No? Wal, your six dollars an' forty cents' wuth o' bees an' forty-six dollars' wuth o' interest is waitin' for ye whenever you should want to go for 'em. An' say, bee-stings is mighty good for

rheumatics. D'you hear? For rheumatics. What I want now is about ten cents' wuth o' plug tobacco. [*Lays bee on box near stove.*

PETER.

[*Going around behind counter.*] No bees, Seth.

SETH.

How'll ye trade for one o' Kizzie's napkin-rings made outer hoss-hair? No? [*Reaching in pocket.*] Cologny bottle made outer the neck-bone of a caow? No? Motto, "God Bless Our Home," made outer dried June-bugs? No? [*Fondling breech of rifle.*] Wal, then, you kin chalk it up on the slate. I jest *got* to have that plug.

FREDERICKA.

Better chalk it up, Peter.

PETER.

[*Dodging gun.*] It's chalked!

[PETER *gives tobacco to* SETH. *Enter* MRS. WOODWARD *at centre.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

Where is your father, Ruth? The food will be in cinders. [*Sees* PETER.] Peter, you're just in time for dinner.

[*She is about to sit on box, when* SETH *motions her away and points to bee.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

I've been worrying so about you, Peter. [*Looking around she sees* FREDERICKA.] Oh, pardon me, Miss Pomeroy. [*Very frigidly.*] I beg you will not let me interfere with any of your arrangements.

FREDERICKA.

Never mind me, Mrs. Woodward. I'm going home to dinner—alone. I've released Peter.

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Advancing toward* FREDERICKA.] You dear, good, generous, self-sacrificing girl!

FREDERICKA.

[*Standing with arms folded.*] As a hired man, merely. I retain my interest in him as my prospective husband.

RUTH.

[*Hastily.*] Oh, Mother! Let me present Mr. O. B. Jackson, who has just given Father the hotel to run.

MRS. WOODWARD.

The hotel! How do you do, Mr. Jackson?

JACKSON.

[*Rising slowly from his seat, which* SETH *slips into.*] Jest tolerable, ma'am. I'm kinked up dreadful with rheumatics. I don't s'pose I'll ever git over it. There's no cure on earth, I'm afraid, for old O. B.

SETH.

Hain't I jest been a-tellin' you bee-stings is good for rheumatics?

JACKSON.

[*He is about to seat himself, but observing* SETH *in his chair he scowls at him and goes over to box, bending over to sit down.*] No, no! Nobody but the good Lord kin ever help old O. B. Nothing on earth will put back the springs into old O. B.'s legs! [JACKSON *sits on bee for a second. Then he rises with a whoop of anguish, throws off coat and vest and attacks suspenders.*] Help! Help! I'm stabbed! Somebody help me shuck my pants!

SETH.

[*Rising and grabbing* JACKSON.] Not here! You kin shuck 'em in the cellar!

[SETH *propels* JACKSON *toward cellar, at right, throws him in and closes door. Immediately a terrific feminine shriek is heard, and* MISS KIMANDER *enters*

from cellar, forcibly ejecting JACKSON, *whom she rushes to centre door and throws out,* PETER *opening the door for her, and* JACKSON *tugging at his suspenders.*

MISS KIMANDER.

Well, I declare! My gracious me! *Who* sicked that old lunatic onto me? Curtis Woodward, you're at the bottom of this! You'd better hide! I'll fix you! I'll go straight home an' write two colyums of choice anecdote an' miscellany that'll make your ears scorch. [*To* SETH.] What are *you* so tickled about, you long-legged idiot? Hain't you got no more spunk'n to set an' grin like a pup gittin' his back scratched while your poor, lone, onprotected sister is snubjected to sech insults? [*Suddenly highly vindictive.*] Wait till you git home! I'll serve you worse'n two colyums of choice anecdote an' miscellany when I have you alone! [*Exit* MISS KIMANDER *at centre.*

SETH.

[*Rising and advancing toward left door. Enter* CURTIS.] Guess I'd better git thar afore her, or she'll hev the toe-nails outer all my hounds to make sofa-cushions of. Sometimes I even ketch her lookin' kinder queer at *me!* [*Exit* SETH.

CURTIS.

No use. I'll have to go ahead and seize it. Where's that ancient shilling-squeezer? I've got a first-rate article of law I want to explain to him.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Come, Curtis; your food will be spoiled. Where is Lord Bunn?

CURTIS.

Oh, yes. He's gone on an errand.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Well, the dinner can't wait. When he comes back he'll know he's to follow you home.

RUTH.

[*At window, right.*] Which way did he go, Father?

CURTIS.

I think he said he had a little business over in Loon Station.

ALL.

Loon Station!

FREDERICKA.

You don't mean to say that Lord Bunn has started for Loon Station on foot?

RUTH.

Oh, Father! He has never been so rash as that?

CURTIS.

Well, I tried to persuade him not to—actually called him back after he'd started, but he simply *would* go.

RUTH.

Father!

CURTIS.

[*Guiltily.*] Well, daughter?

RUTH.

Did you *ask* him to go?

CURTIS.

Oh, no—not to say *ask* him.

RUTH.

Did he go on your account?

CURTIS.

Well, partly.

RUTH.

Heavens! [*To* FREDERICKA.] Tell me, tell me! Could he possibly get there alive?

FREDERICKA.

[*Shaking her head.*] Never! It's impossible.

[RUTH *throws herself into a chair despairingly, her back to the rest.*

CURTIS.

Why, Ruth! I never thought you cared ——

RUTH.

Cared! Don't talk to me! Don't speak to me! If he comes to harm on *your* account, I'll never —— [*Breaking down.*] Oh, Father! I didn't mean to speak so wickedly. Forgive me! [*Rising, to* FREDERICKA.] Can't we reach him some way—somehow?

FREDERICKA.

If he hasn't reached the mountains yet, my mare might overtake him. If he has,—why, she can't.

CURTIS.

This is my business. Will you lend me your horse, young lady, and show me the way?

FREDERICKA.

I'll drive you myself. [*Sound of sleigh-bells outside.*] There's my lazy fellow now. Come! We haven't any time to lose.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Curtis! You can't! Oh, Curtis, you must not!

CURTIS.

I must. And if we don't overtake him I'll follow him over the mountains. [*To* RUTH.] I didn't know, my dear. I'm going to do my best to bring him back.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Oh, Miss Pomeroy! You'll bring my husband back safe?

[*Tableau, with* CURTIS *putting on overcoat and muffler with heroic gesture,* MRS. WOODWARD *and* RUTH *clinging to him.* PETER *is at window.*

PETER.

Rubbish!

[PETER *goes to centre door, holds it open expectantly, and enter* LORD BUNN *carrying two baskets, which he places on floor at rear. He is followed by* JACKSON, *who occasionally rubs the spot where the bee stung him.* RUTH *and* MRS. WOODWARD *drop* CURTIS *and run to* LORD BUNN.

CURTIS.

Well, I'm awfully glad to see you, Lord Bunn; but you've spoiled as interesting a relief expedition as I ever heard of. Did you have to turn back?

LORD BUNN.

To tell the truth, I never started.

CURTIS.

Never started?

LORD BUNN.

And moreover, never intended to start. You see I've got a couple of carrier-pigeons that I bought from Miss Kimander ——

CURTIS.

You said you were going yourself.

LORD BUNN.

Pardon me. You insisted that I was, and I didn't like to contradict you.

CURTIS.

Sir, you were doing it to influence me to—to—[*glancing at* RUTH] you know what. I tell you now, that if I had as many reasons for favoring you as I have against you, I'd never give my consent to a man who has so heartlessly humbugged me and made me ridiculous.

RUTH.

But, Father, Lord Bunn didn't make *me* ridiculous, and it isn't *you* he wants to marry!

CURTIS.

What, what!

RUTH.

Oh, where's the use of pretending? I—— [*Turns away.*] Oh, I *can't* say it!

LORD BUNN.

[*Advancing toward* RUTH, *taking her hand and facing* CURTIS.] Let me say it for you. You see, sir, I tried the American plan before I ventured on the British fashion, and, by George! it worked! I ask you to forgive a man desperately in earnest for having seemed to deceive you even so far as that.

CURTIS.

I *am* astonished! Here! I'll give a hundred dollars for a carrier-pigeon! A thousand!

LORD BUNN.

No use. I've cornered the market.

JACKSON.

They're Seth's pigeons, an' Seth owes me money. Sheriff, seize them birds for me, an'

help yourself to 'em—at a thousand apiece—or I'll give ye the two for fifteen hundred.

FREDERICKA.

Seth's already paid you—in bees.

JACKSON.

He's nearly kilt me, an' I'll have the law on him.

FREDERICKA.

You refuse the bees? Then you can't take any other live-stock you fancy. Either the cash or a trade, and he's offered you one trade already. That may not be good law, but it's common sense.

[JACKSON *has dropped behind to look into the baskets.*

LORD BUNN.

And look here, Mr. Whatever-your-name-is, I promise that if you touch my property you'll go to jail, but you'll go to the hospital first. Hands off!

[JACKSON *reluctantly moves away from the pigeons.*

CURTIS.

Ah! That reminds me! [*To* JACKSON.] You very fluently quoted the law to me just now, my friend?

JACKSON.

Sheriff's law I know by heart.

CURTIS.

You are not ignorant, then, of that part allowing the Sheriff at need to call upon any bystander for assistance?

JACKSON.

[*Carelessly.*] Oh, yes. If you hev any trouble you kin git help fast enough.

CURTIS.

[*Raising right arm.*] Then, by the sacred majesty of the law of this Commonwealth, I, Curtis Woodward, Sheriff of this County and Chief of the Amalgamated Pump-Cart Number One, do demand of you, O. B. Jackson, that you aid me in seizing and maintaining this hotel.

FREDERICKA.

Serve you right!

PETER.

Stung again!

JACKSON.

No, I can't! I only want what's mine by rights!

CURTIS.

You'll get it. How are you on holy-stonin' the floor with a scrubbin'-brush? For by all the gods of Sheriffs rolled in a bunch, you'll have a broken back an' housemaid's knee fore an' aft when *I* git through with ye. You refuse?

JACKSON.

Now, I didn't go so fur. I know the law.

FREDERICKA.

But if you were a mind-reader, Sheriff, he'd be doing lock-step in half an hour.

CURTIS.

Run the hotel, eh? I'll *run* you! Well, Lord Bunn?

LORD BUNN.

Mr. Woodward, I give you your choice. In *this* basket [*pointing*] are your dispatch and mine to my father, asking him not to press the loan. In *that* [*pointing*] is a telegram from me urging him to push it to the wall. I hate to take advantage of you, but unless you give your consent to my marriage with your daughter, I'll let the other pigeon go.

FREDERICKA.

I like a lord with spunk.

PETER.

Rawther strong!

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Clasping her hands.*] Oh, Curtis!

RUTH.

Oh, Father!

[JACKSON *has meanwhile sneaked back to the baskets.*

CURTIS.

I appear to be in an unpopular minority. You've all forgotten one thing, however.

LORD BUNN.

One thing?

CURTIS.

Valentine Quincy.

RUTH.

Father, Valentine Quincy and I never——

LORD BUNN.

[*Holding up his hand.*] One moment. I agree to resign all pretensions to Miss Woodward's hand in case Mr. Quincy claims her.

RUTH.

Oh, Bunny!

CURTIS.

That's middling fair. Let me think. One of those baskets—sure you know which is which?

LORD BUNN.

Quite sure. The one with the red ribbon is the *wrong* one.

[*As* CURTIS *speaks,* JACKSON *takes the red ribbon off one basket and ties it on the other, changing the position of baskets accordingly.*

CURTIS.

One of 'em holds my salvation, and one my dam—t'other thing. I don't feel as if I can blame you, Lord Bunn. I'd have done as much myself, I do believe. But as it is, why! You can loose whichever bird you choose. [LORD BUNN *takes up basket without red ribbon and moves toward centre door. All follow him.*] And if everything comes out all right—*if*, I say ——

[*All stand at open door, while* LORD BUNN, *just outside, apparently releases pigeon. All stand watching its flight.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*At the Eagle Tavern, the same afternoon. The office of the hotel is shown—a typical country hotel, with desk at the rear, opening at left. It is just at right of centre. There is a chair behind it, a register on the desk, and several speaking-tubes. At left of centre is a round table, sparsely strewn with newspapers. Several chairs about it. Door at right leading to rest of the hotel. Alongside it a door leading to the cellar.*

PETER *discovered, seated behind desk, feet on register, reading paper and nodding, just on the border of sleep. A bell rings.* PETER *lazily lifts speaking-tube in front of him, calls "Hello!" and listens for response.*

PETER.

[*Speaking up tube.*] Cold? Forget it! [*Puts tube to his ear. Murmurs reprovingly into tube.*] Such language! Tut, tut! [*Another ring.* PETER *lifts another tube and listens.*] Yes, ma'am.

[*Strikes call-bell languidly and calls "Front" in a mild voice, drops tube,*

yawns, continues reading paper, and evidently does not care whether "Front" answers or not. The bell rings violently. PETER *dozes. Enter* CURTIS, *from right, silk hat on, apron from neck to heels, and carrying pan of dishes. As he enters he calls back over his shoulder.*

CURTIS.

Got to dry 'em somewhere. Better be handy to the bell, hadn't I? [*Puts dish-pan on table. Bell rings again.* CURTIS *looks toward desk and sees* PETER *asleep.*] Peter! [PETER *does not stir.* CURTIS *calls more loudly.*] Oh, Peter! [PETER *still motionless.* CURTIS *carefully places a large platter on the floor and drops a dish on it.* PETER *sits up slowly, bell rings, and he listens at tube.*] Peter, while this keeping a hotel ain't what it's cracked up to be, still if I only had your end of the job I think I could stagger along under it. Where's that hired girl? Gits lazier an' lazier every minute. Hurry up, now! [*Crosses to inner door and beckons. Enter* JACKSON *with pail and mop, looking disreputable.* JACKSON *puts down the pail, straightens up, and rubs his back.* CURTIS *crosses to table and picks up a towel with a plate in it. Hands towel and plate to* JACKSON.] Here! I want you to git onto the job.

[CURTIS *and* JACKSON *cross to meet at centre, and* CURTIS *hands* JACKSON *the towel, in doing which he drops the plate.*

JACKSON.

[*Crying.*] There's another plate gone! Didn't I tell you every time you smash a dish it's three to fourteen cents out of *my* pocket?

CURTIS.

That don't worry me as much as you might think.

JACKSON.

How're you goin' to feed the boarders if you break all the crockery?

CURTIS.

You've an intelligent mind, O. B., even if it does think backwards. That never occurred to me. For two cents I'd push the hull tableful over.

[JACKSON, *with a cry of alarm, rushes to table, places himself in front of it, and "shoos" at* CURTIS *with towel.*

JACKSON.

Don't you dast! Don't you dast to touch it!

[*Fusses with dishes, whimpering.*

CURTIS.

Now, weep no more, O. B. I didn't call you in here because it tickles me to see you weep. It don't. But I like to gaze upon you wrastlin' with the work. At it, man! At it! [*Seats himself on chair nearest desk, picks up paper and commences reading it.*] This hotel life, O. B., this bein' compelled to sit idly by an' see you mishandlin' that pottery-ware, is very exhaustin'. [*Reading aloud from paper.*] "Hubert Fox informs us that although turned ninety-two he has so fur this winter thrashed——" Con*found* that paper! [*Dashes it on floor.*] I've read it through four times already, includin' the patent-medicine ads. They make an old man of me. How do *you* like the hotel business, Peter?

PETER.

Fine.

CURTIS.

[*Rising and leaning over desk.*] You like what folks call workin' for a livin', eh? [*Bell rings and* CURTIS *picks up speaking-tube and listens. Then talks into tube.*] Fifteen minutes? Too bad. [*To* PETER.] Lady in Number 18 wants her afternoon tea.

PETER.

[*Languidly striking call-bell.*] Front.

CURTIS.

Let me teach you your business. Here! [*Settles silk hat firmly on his head, gives call-bell a whack and shouts loudly.*] Front! [JACKSON *starts and drops a plate.*] There's another fourteen cents gone to thunder. How do you ever expect to get rich quick at this game if you throw money away like that? Lady in Number 18 wants cup of tea and biscuits. Lively, now!

[JACKSON *sits on floor, rubbing his legs and bellowing.*

JACKSON.

I ain't a-goin' to climb to the top floor for nobody. I jest can't!

CURTIS.

Now, pay attention, O. B. You decline to assist me, an' as Sheriff I'll put you in the calaboose, an' as Chief of the Fire Department I'll play the hose on you when I git you thar—an' I'll have the President of the Dorcas Society come an' sing hymns to you. Now, trot!

JACKSON.

[*Rising.*] Say, do you know who that is in Number 18? That's the ex-potato peeler lady stayin' on to even up for her wages.

CURTIS.

I don't care if it's Mary Queens of Scots. She wants her tea, an' she's a-goin' to have it. Who's runnin' this place, anyway? You've elected me skipper, an' you've got to skip as I call the figures. I'll have no mutiny aboard this craft. [*Roars.*] *Git!* [JACKSON *hastily goes out at inner door,* CURTIS *looking after him with satisfaction.*] That's one of the few pleasures of this mess—to see that old miser sweat blood. Otherwise—Peter, I've always sorter looked down on men runnin' hotels as below me in intellect, but never agin. What with kicking boarders, incompetent help —— [*Looks at thermometer and turns up coat-collar.*] Jehoshaphat! Look at this for a temperature! [*Grabs speaking-tube.*] Here, you, down there! Yes, you! If you don't throw on a little more hot juice this tavern will turn into a skating-rink. [*Listens, then calls down tube.*] Now, now! If you have anything to say you come right up here on the spar-deck an' say it. [*Hanging up tube.*] I ain't a-goin' to take no back talk from a tin trumpet. [*Ring at bell.* CURTIS *grabs the other speaking-tube and listens, then speaks into it.*] Number 14, if you're cold, you can make a few laps around the room and warm up. [*Bell rings again.* CURTIS *listens at other end of tube, and takes off his hat to answer.*] Yes, ma'am. He's on the way up.

[*Bell rings again.* CURTIS *listens at other tube, then speaks through it, putting his hat firmly on as he does so.*] That you again, Number 14? If I come up there I'll *warm* you! [*Listens. Calls back.*] Oh, don't mention it. [*Hangs up tube. Enter* LORD BUNN *from cellar, grimy, dressed in overalls, with cigarette and monocle, and carrying coal-shovel.*] Lord Bunn, if I weren't paying you something less than nothing a day I'd fire you on the spot. Is this the way you tend furnace? Go look at that thermometer.

LORD BUNN.

I want to tell you, Mr. Woodward ——

[LORD BUNN *is about to seat himself.* CURTIS *stops him.*

CURTIS.

Here, don't soil all the furniture. [CURTIS *spreads newspaper on chair.* LORD BUNN *sits down.* CURTIS *lifts each of* LORD BUNN'S *feet and puts a newspaper under each one, and gingerly takes shovel and puts it out at door. Enter* RUTH, *from right, and begins to pile dishes in pan. She is dressed plainly and wears an apron.* CURTIS, *to* LORD BUNN.] Now, if you feel to home, go ahead. What's the trouble? Hours too long? Pay too short? You ain't on strike, I hope? [*Enter* JACKSON,

carrying tray which he rests on table near LORD BUNN. CURTIS *continues.*] Because if you *are* on strike I'll have to exercise my prerogatives as Sheriff and lock you up in the ice-house until you're ready to stoke again, and meanwhile O. B.'ll have to tend furnace.

[JACKSON *grabs up tray and runs to* LORD BUNN, *crying.*

JACKSON.

Oh, Your Honor! Your Lordship! Don't let him put no more trials on a heart-broken old nigger slave!

CURTIS.

There, now, O. B., that'll be about all from *you!* We don't want no exhibition of fancy water-works.

[LORD BUNN *helps himself to a handful of sandwiches and a bottle on* JACKSON'S *tray, takes a drink from bottle and then a bite.*

JACKSON.

That's for Number 4! He'll *leave* if he don't git it!

LORD BUNN.

Stoking furnace is bloomin' dry work. You tell Number 4 you gave his beer and sand-

wiches to a man that needed them more than he did.

JACKSON.

[*Moving toward inner door.*] It's a conspiracy! I'll have the hull crew of you indicted! [*Exit* JACKSON *with empty tray.*

LORD BUNN.

It is needless, Mr. Woodward, to remind you of my motives in volunteering ——

[RUTH *looks at* LORD BUNN *with an encouraging smile.* CURTIS *turns toward her, and she turns her back on him.*

CURTIS.

No; we can skip that, I guess. Come, what's your complaint?

LORD BUNN.

No complaint; but I have something to tell you, and I don't know how you'll take it.

CURTIS.

Well, I guess I'll take it like I've taken everything else that's lying around loose in this town. I'll kick hard, but I suppose I'll have to board and lodge it in the end.

LORD BUNN.

You recall our sending out the pigeon this morning?

CURTIS.

Recall it! It's hung to me like the smell of onions. I've thought of nothing else since.

LORD BUNN.

And the message meant everything to me. If it reached the telegraph office as it was meant it should —— [*A pause.*

CURTIS.

As it was meant it should? Is there any reasonable doubt about it?

LORD BUNN.

[*Rising.*] Mr. Woodward, I don't know how it happened, but the wrong pigeon got away.

[RUTH *clasps her hands and looks appealingly at* CURTIS.

CURTIS.

[*Quietly.*] With your telegram to squeeze me?

LORD BUNN.

But I found it out an hour after, and let the right one go.

CURTIS.

Lord Bunn, this can't be a scheme to humiliate me further. I will do you that justice.

LORD BUNN.

Believe me, no, Mr. Woodward.

CURTIS.

If that wrong pigeon got there first, and of course he did with that start, I'm done. You know that?

LORD BUNN.

I'm afraid so.

CURTIS.

Well, get back to your shovelling. It's getting cold.

LORD BUNN.

But won't you let me ——

CURTIS.

No. Outside of Valentine's claim, I don't mind owning that I had a sort of sneaking regard for you. But I won't let you have my girl if she must go to you as a pauper's daughter—and made one by you.

RUTH.

But *dear* Father ——

CURTIS.

[*Crossing to* RUTH.] Come, now, Ruth, we must show some spirit.

[PETER *rises heavily, turns up collar and moves toward outside door.*

PETER.

Call me back when the furnace-man and the kitchen-maid go.

[PETER *says this over his shoulder as he reaches door. Unnoticed by him* SETH *has entered, and stands just inside the door, with his gun held bolt upright before him, the butt on the floor. As* PETER *turns to go, his eyes are about on a level with the tip of the gun-barrels, and he makes a sudden swing around to the door as if on a pivot, keeping his face close to the gun-barrels as if afraid to take his eyes off them, and so makes exit backward.*

SETH.

[*Coming down stage.*] I thought to have brung ye a treat, miss, but [*holding up fragments of a bird*] they hain't enough of this left to feed a hungry kitten. I s'pose the remains'll have to go to Kizzie to be made into a neck-tie, or a door-mat, or suthin. But ef I hadn't

a-been so clost, you'd 'a' had a fine little pigeon-pie all to yourself.

CURTIS.

Pigeon-pie!

LORD BUNN.

[*Crossing to* SETH *and stooping with his hands on his knees to look more closely at the bird.*] Great Scott, you simpleton! You've killed one of your own pigeons—one of *my* own pigeons!

SETH.

[*Scratching his head.*] I *thought* he looked darn familiar!

[CURTIS *looks at* LORD BUNN. RUTH *crosses to* LORD BUNN *and* SETH.

CURTIS.

[*Pointing to bird.*] Which?

[LORD BUNN *wearily passes his hand across his forehead and nods his head.*

RUTH.

Mr. Kimander ——

SETH.

Oh, yes,—yes! That's me! Kinder startled me. Ain't been called *Mister* Kimander before in my life, so fur as I kin remember. Yet so it is, an' so I be, Mr. Kimander. Wal, miss?

RUTH.

When did you kill this pigeon?

SETH.

Wal, I been huntin' 'round most all day, off an' on, sence I left the store. It might 'a' been five hours ago—no, three's more likely—or was it this morning? I dunno, ma'am. I'll be honest with ye. I dunno. But still, I think ——

CURTIS.

Shut up, you—you flounder! You know, or you don't know?

SETH.

What I say I'll stick to. I dunno, an' that's honest.

LORD BUNN.

Rather chilly, isn't it? Fancy I'd better go down and shovel coal.

[*Enter* JACKSON *with sandwiches on tray. Runs around* LORD BUNN *to avoid him, and drops sandwiches on floor. Grabs them up hastily and runs behind* SETH *for protection. Exit* LORD BUNN *at cellar door, and* RUTH *at inner door, with pan of dishes.* SETH *is about to leave when* JACKSON *catches him by the sleeve.*

JACKSON.

Don't ye go, Seth. Sheriff, my other interests is a-sufferin', an' I want to git away. Why can't you empanel Seth to do my work until I git back? I'll make it all right with ye, Seth. I'll—yes, by gum! I'll give ye fifteen cents to take my place for three hours.

SETH.

What! Me, a free-born American citizen, swab up floors an' mess around with sangwiches three hours for fifteen cents? Not for fifteen million dollars. My job of deliverin' telegrams is jest about enough to keep me runnin' nicely.

JACKSON.

Shucks! There ain't no telegrams to be delivered now.

SETH.

But there will be afore night. The wires is hummin' business. Must 'a' mended the break over Loon Station way.

CURTIS.

[*Eagerly.*] There may be telegrams coming in? Wait for me, Seth. [*Puts on coat and mittens. Winds "comforter" about neck. To* JACKSON.] You stay here an' keep house, d'ye mind? An' ef I hear any more nonsense about

not enjoyin' your job, you know what you'll catch. You like the place, don't you?

JACKSON.

Wa-a-a-al ——

CURTIS.

What!

JACKSON.

[*Crying into towel.*] Oh, yes. Extremely. Very, very much.

CURTIS.

Don't let your joy overcome you so. [*Following* SETH *to door.*] All right, Seth.

[*Exeunt* CURTIS *and* SETH.

JACKSON.

How long is this bondage a-goin' to continue? Oh, that I should ever come to this! Me, the richest man in the hull county, actin' as kitchen help to a shoddy third-rate tavern! [*Bell rings.* JACKSON *continues, shaking his fist at bell.*] Ring, darn ye! That's it! Ring! Why don't ye ring some more?

[*Enter* FREDERICKA *from outside.*

FREDERICKA.

Why, how funny! I never heard of any one ringing to get into a hotel. Why aren't you

out in front to welcome the coming, speed the parting guest?

JACKSON.

You might as well begin to part right away. You can't come here to board. I won't have it. There's too dinged many here now. Might as well order my tombstun to once an' be done with it.

FREDERICKA.

Oh, you couldn't prevent my coming if I wanted to. But I'm not going to stay. I've only called to have a word with my Pa. Where is he?

[FREDERICKA *crosses to table and sits down in chair, facing front, pulling off her gloves.* JACKSON *stands looking at her.*

JACKSON.

[*Shakily.*] Who?

FREDERICKA.

Pa.

JACKSON.

Your father?

FREDERICKA.

Yes, my adopted father, the Sheriff. Tell him I'm here.

JACKSON.

That's it! Order me around! Don't let *my* feelings stop you. Wipe your feet on poor old O. B. He hain't got no friends.

[JACKSON *weeps.*

FREDERICKA.

[*Rising and crossing to him.*] Why, O. B., I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. If I did hurt them I apologize. Where's Mr. Woodward? I'll go to him myself.

JACKSON.

He's give me a little spell of peace. He's gone out, an' I hope to Moses he never comes back. To think what I've stood from that man!

FREDERICKA.

From the Sheriff? Nonsense! The kindest-hearted man I ever saw.

JACKSON.

You hain't acquainted with his heart since he took up the hotel business.

FREDERICKA.

Why, I believe he'd do anything I asked him.

JACKSON.

I wish to goodness you'd ask him to turn me loose.

FREDERICKA.

Oh, he couldn't do that.

JACKSON.

Make him let me alone, then. He's been a-bullyin' me to that extent I'm fair mad. I *can't* stand it, an' I won't.

FREDERICKA.

Oh, you'll get used to a little thing like that.

JACKSON.

Used to it! A little thing like that? Why, he treats me worse'n a slave—as if I hadn't no human feelin's. It's fun for him, but for me! Doesn't he think I've got sentiments to be trodden on, an' old bones to weary? I'm a joke to him, an' to everybody else. Jest because I want what's my own I'm the butt of all. Miss Fredericka [*sitting down in chair and hiding his face in his apron*], I'm a miserable old man, with not a friend in the world, and here I'm treated at my time of life like Tom Fool, an' everybody cackles at me. Oh, Miss Fredericka! Don't they see—can't they see that

I'm suffering? But no! I'm only old O. B., the town miser, and the common laughing-stock.

FREDERICKA.

Mr. Jackson, I've sometimes made fun of you ——

JACKSON.

You have, an' you oughter be ashamed to say it.

FREDERICKA.

[*Earnestly.*] I am, but I'm not afraid to confess it. I'll not laugh at you again. As to Mr. Woodward ——

JACKSON.

Miss Fredericka, do you think you could soften him? It isn't only the work, but I crave human sympathy instead of ridicule, and I tell you truly, I haven't a friend in the town.

FREDERICKA.

You poor old soul! There's my hand on it that you have at least *one.*

[*Reaches out her hand.*

JACKSON.

[*Taking her hand.*] Miss Fredericka ——

FREDERICKA.

Yes?

JACKSON.

You're so good—could you say so to me even if I had done you wrong?

FREDERICKA.

I think so—yes, freely.

JACKSON.

[*Moving away to centre and keeping his back to her.*] Well, I have.

FREDERICKA.

You have? What was it?

JACKSON.

The greatest wrong, almost, that one could do to another. You've been living, so to speak, under a cloud all your life. Could you forgive the man who put you there and left you there?

FREDERICKA.

What do you mean?

JACKSON.

[*Facing her.*] It was so long ago. When I came here I was poor—desperate poor. My wife had just died, and I didn't know where to turn to find bread for the little one I brought with me.

FREDERICKA.

Your little one! *Your* wife!

JACKSON.

Yes, Fredericka, my wife and *your* mother. No need to go over what I did. When I saw you so well taken care of—I never had loved you as some people love their children, and I was glad to be rid of a burden. No one knew I had come here with a child, and so—and so ——

FREDERICKA.

And so you left me to bear whatever shame could come!

JACKSON.

You were as good as the daughter of Squire Pomeroy, and so comfortable—and if I owned you, where was your inheritance—and I didn't appear to need you, or you me—until now, unbeknownst, you gave me the first kind word I've had in all these years. [*Timidly.*] Maybe I've done wrong to tell you now?

FREDERICKA.

No, I don't think so. Wait! Listen! You say my mother—my mother!—was your wife?

JACKSON.

My true wedded wife. I can prove that easy.

FREDERICKA.

My mother!

JACKSON.

[*Sniffling.*] You don't seem to be thinking much of your father.

FREDERICKA.

You can't say I forced this on you, you know. *I* didn't want any father. I was well enough off as I was. And really, Mr. Jackson, you are nothing to go into ecstasies over, now *are* you? Of course, in the good way, I reverence you and I have affection for you—and all that sort of thing [*waving her hand*]. But as a matter of fact —— Oh, you are *so* different from the father I always pictured to myself.

JACKSON.

Wal, a father with a marriage certificate ain't to be despised, is he?

FREDERICKA.

I shudder to think what you would be without the certificate. There! I am grateful to you, of course.

JACKSON.

And you forgive me?

FREDERICKA.

Forgive you? I'm very thankful to you. I've had a perfectly lovely time without you, and you've done just right—you're discovered exactly in the nick of time.

[*Enter* MRS. WOODWARD, *at inner door.*

JACKSON.

Mr. Woodward's gone down to the telegraph office, ma'am.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Will you tell him when he comes in that I want to see him? [*Turns to leave.*

FREDERICKA.

One moment, Mrs. Woodward. [*To* JACKSON.] You may go, Mr. Jackson. [JACKSON *leaves the room.* FREDERICKA *continues, to* MRS. WOODWARD.] Won't you wait? I want to speak to you *so* much! [MRS. WOODWARD *remains stiffly standing, her hands crossed in front of her.*] It's a serious subject, Mrs. Woodward—you can guess what it is. Won't you sit down? [MRS. WOODWARD *and* FREDERICKA *sit facing each other.*] I am no diplomatist, Mrs. Woodward. I come to the point at once. Do you think you are acting wisely with Peter?

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Stiffly.*] Do I understand that you propose teaching me my duty toward my children?

FREDERICKA.

There it is. You persist in regarding Peter as a child.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Is this necessary? Are you not paining us both by referring to something that had better be forgotten?

FREDERICKA.

But I *can't* forget, and Peter, for all his stolidity, can't forget either. If you only knew what a loving nature he hides under that slow, phlegmatic air!

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Slightly mollified.*] My dear young lady! Fancy you telling me anything about my own son! I have not watched my boy from the cradle up not to know what he is.

FREDERICKA.

You speak of Peter as a child. Does not your experience tell you that if children are refused homely, sensible goodies, they will hunger for other things much worse? That if you

lock up the molasses taffy and the cookies they will steal chocolate-creams and plum-cake when you are not looking?

MRS. WOODWARD.

Why, Miss Pomeroy, what do you know about such things?

FREDERICKA.

Common sense, my dear Mrs. Woodward. You must confess that I am right. Your son —I want to be perfectly frank with you—your son is, I believe, I know, very fond of me. If you absolutely forbid him to think of me, to whom are you driving him? I at least am a *good* woman.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Oh, don't say that, Miss Pomeroy! If I thought that! If I only thought it possible——

FREDERICKA.

Look into your knowledge of men and women, and then tell me I am wrong. Are you so indifferent to your boy's happiness?

MRS. WOODWARD.

Miss Pomeroy, I have three objects in life. For myself, I do not care. But if I may see

Peter happy, and Ruth, and their father, my cup of content is full.

FREDERICKA.

And you believe that by opposing Peter's wish to marry a good woman—oh, I make so bold as to say so myself—you are securing his happiness? Think!

MRS. WOODWARD.

Oh, if it were only—if it were only not——

FREDERICKA.

Mrs. Woodward, a woman is not to be cherished like a jewel or thrown away like a rag as she knows or does not know her parents. Either I myself am worthy of your son's love, or I am not. Put yourself in my position. Suppose, through no fault of your own, you had been barred from marrying the man you loved. Suppose you had seen him, careless of consequences, going to the dogs because he could not marry you. How many lives would have been wrecked! Look at me from your own standpoint—for I love Peter—I love your son. I will be true and good to him. Our one wish is to make him happy—you as his mother and I as his wife. If his happiness is your desire, how can you refuse him to me? Can you look

without a shudder at the consequences of separating us? Ah! You appealed to me, as his mother, to give him up. I appeal to you, as his sweetheart, to join hands with me in making him a good and a contented man!

[*Both rise.* FREDERICKA *stretches out her hands to* MRS. WOODWARD, *and* MRS. WOODWARD, *after a pause, clasps her in her arms.*

MRS. WOODWARD.

My dear! My dear! You may be—you *are* right! My dear! My dear!

[*Enter* PETER, *blowing on his hands, collar turned up. Both women rush at him and clasp him in their arms, exclaiming, "Peter!"*

PETER.

[*To* MRS. WOODWARD.] Acting like a gentleman, Mother. [*Shakes hands with her. To* FREDERICKA.] Smart old girl! [*Kisses her.*] Everybody satisfied?

BOTH.

Yes, yes!

PETER.

Why these tears?

BOTH.

Oh, Peter! I'm so happy! Oh, Peter! *Dear* Peter!

[*Both about to embrace* PETER *again, but he wards them off with uplifted hand.*

PETER.

Back up!

[*Outer door is thrown violently open, and in rushes* JACKSON, *who turns to hold it open for* MISS KIMANDER, *who also enters running.*

MISS KIMANDER.

[*Holding up a telegram.*] Where's Curtis? Where's the Sheriff? Where's Lord Bunn? Where *is* that critter Curt?

[*Enter* CURTIS *hurriedly from centre.*

CURTIS.

Here I am, Kizzie. You're certainly a wonder as a sprinter.

MISS KIMANDER.

Where's the Lord? Hey, Lord, where are ye? [*Goes to inner door and pokes head in.*] Hey, there, your Majesty! [*Noise from cellar as of some one falling.* MISS KIMANDER *runs to cellar door and* RUTH *enters in amazement at inner door.*] You down cellar, Lord Bunn?

Come up, come up an' hear the glad tidings—glad tidings from afar. [*To* CURTIS, *handing him telegram.*] There's a precious piece of news for ye. Read it, do. For I can't keep in another minute. If you don't read it right away I'll forgit my professional etiquetty an' tell what's in it.

CURTIS.

You're worse than a lady janitor with a postal card. If you don't behave I'll put you in the hen-coop, as sure as I'm Sheriff.

MISS KIMANDER.

You will, eh? Better read *that*, first.

[*Enter* LORD BUNN, *from cellar, grimy, and with shovel and monocle, as before.*

LORD BUNN.

What's the row?

MISS KIMANDER.

Mercy me! Mercy sakes! Be you Lord Bunn? I want to know! Mercy me! Curt, if you don't read that telegram I'll bust!

CURTIS.

[*Leisurely opening telegram.*] Your fate and mine are in here, likely, Lord Bunn, my boy. And I will say this for you. As a lord, I don't know how you compare with the average, not

having known many specimens; but as a coal-heaver you'll pass, and the boarders ought to give you a testimonial.

LORD BUNN.

[*Going up to* RUTH.] I have no bleeding heart to lay at your feet, Ruth, but I've got a dozen big blisters—and they hurt like the deuce.

CURTIS.

[*Stops in opening telegram.*] But don't forget Valentine Quincy!

LORD BUNN.

Oh, *damn* Valentine Quincy!

CURTIS.

Not at all, not at all. I've given my word on that, and my word is as good as my bond—maybe better, now. [RUTH *turns away despairingly.* CURTIS, *reading telegram.*] Hurrah! [LORD BUNN *is about to kiss* RUTH, *when* CURTIS *stops him, and reads telegram aloud.*] "Your appointment as Sheriff illegal. Please turn over office to Lucius Peck. Holcolm, Governor." Hooray! Lucius! Hey, where's Lucius? [CURTIS *tears off shields as* LUCIUS *enters from left.* CURTIS, *running to him, pins the two badges on him, and hands him telegram, saying.*] There you are, Lucius!

Sheriff, Fire Department, hotel, everything! With all my accumulated honors I thee endow —an' you kin hev O. B., too. Whish!

[*Shoos* JACKSON *toward* LUCIUS.

MISS KIMANDER.

[*To* CURTIS.] Where's Lord Bunn's telegram?

CURTIS.

You gave me only one.

LUCIUS.

Mebbe this is it. I picked it up outside.

[*Hands telegram to* LORD BUNN.

LORD BUNN.

Allow me. [*Opens telegram.*

CURTIS.

Weren't there any other telegrams for me, Kizzie?

MISS KIMANDER.

Mercy sakes! Ain't one enough? Losing your place all of a sudden like that? I shouldn't think you'd want any more of the sort. Don't be greedy!

LORD BUNN.

Heigho! You remember my elopers?

CURTIS.

Elopers? We're not bothering over elopers. This is no time for light summer fiction. What we need is more telegrams.

RUTH.

Oh, tell us about them. Did they manage to get married without you?

LORD BUNN.

Listen, all listen—Mr. Woodward, won't you *please* listen? Mrs. Woodward, I know you're interested in the romantic young couple? [*Reads.*] "On the third instant, in an effective if hasty manner, by a greatly hurried but undoubted clergyman, the daughter of an eminent brewer and the only son of a distinguished and much disgusted steel magnate. We beat them by a head. Yours, happily [*pauses*] Thomasine and—Valentine Quincy."

[LORD BUNN *and* RUTH *move toward each other.*

CURTIS.

[*Stepping between them.*] Why, young sir, you seem to take it for granted that I've given my consent?

RUTH.

Father, you know you did!

MRS. WOODWARD.

I really don't see how you can dispute it gracefully now, Curtis.

CURTIS.

I do. Ruth, would you marry this man when you don't know whether his monkey-shines with those infernal pigeons have bankrupted your father? No, no! Peter, in the midst of this general joy, with only the one trifling thing undetermined [*looks hard at* LORD BUNN, *who draws his hand in an embarrassed way across his nose*] of whether I am a pauper or a millionaire—a mere trifle—I'm awfully sorry for you, my son.

PETER.

What for?

CURTIS.

Well, everybody but you and me seems to get some sort of satisfaction out of it all, but——

PETER.

[*Taking* MRS. WOODWARD *by the hand and leading her before* CURTIS.] Speak your piece.

MRS. WOODWARD.

Oh, Curtis! It didn't seem maybe just right, and I don't know if it's just right as it is, but——

CURTIS.

You've consented? [*To* PETER *and* FREDERICKA.] Bless you, my children!

JACKSON.

Ain't I to be consulted, too?

CURTIS.

What! When the Sheriff—or the ex-Sheriff—gives his only son in marriage, has he got to consult with the second-assistant mop-handle of a bankrupt hotel? It's bad enough as it is to have a furnace-man trying to break into the family.

FREDERICKA.

[*Demurely.*] He thinks he ought to be consulted just because he's my father.

ALL.

Your father!

CURTIS.

[*Rapidly.*] And to put it delicately the husband of her mother?

JACKSON.

[*Taking paper from his pocket.*] There's the marriage certificate.

MRS. WOODWARD.

[*Embracing* FREDERICKA.] My dear girl! And you knew it all the time?

FREDERICKA.

Only just before we talked together. There he is. *I* didn't want him, and I hope you enjoy him now you've got him.

JACKSON.

I won't go near you to bother you, Fredericka.

MRS. WOODWARD.

But, my dear, we're delighted to have him—at a distance, of course. He was all but indispensable.

CURTIS.

Kizzie, don't you think you'd better get back to the telegraph office?

[MISS KIMANDER *has been scribbling in her note-book.*

MISS KIMANDER.

Oh, I wouldn't have missed this for anything. Your losing your place, your daughter marryin' a duke, your son's sweetheart the long-lost daughter of the richest man in town ——

CURTIS.

You send that balderdash to the papers and I'll publish it that you're O. B.'s long-lost wife, and give him fifty cents to swear to it.

[*Enter* SETH *with basket.*

SETH.

Kizzie, here's one of your homers that jest come in with a message. [MISS KIMANDER *runs to him and peeps in basket.*] You understand, folks, a homer's a pigeon that's been trained to fly home. This one come from Loon Station. You understand this *ain't* the one I shot. No. Homers ——

CURTIS.

Seth, we will spare your remarks on natural history until a more appropriate season. Where is the message that bird has brought?

MISS KIMANDER.

[*Rising from her knees at the side of the basket.*] I can't find it.

CURTIS.

Lost?

SETH.

Naw. I took it off for safe-keeping. I got it. [*Searches pocket with vacant stare, then his hat.* CURTIS *is all impatience.* SETH *continues.*] Why, here 'tis, in my hand all the time!

CURTIS.

Who's it for?

SETH.

Wal, the operator at Loon Station copied it down, but forgot the address. Might be for most anybody, and mightn't be for nobody.

MISS KIMANDER.

Give it to me. I know what it is. An order for two colyums more of interestin' anecdote an' miscellany. Hand it to me.

CURTIS.

More likely for me. Give it here, Seth, and I'll look it over.

[MISS KIMANDER *snatches at the message, and* CURTIS *puts out his hand for it.* SETH *holds it high above his head, and leaps on the hotel desk. The others crowd around the desk.*

JACKSON.

I'll give you ten cents for it, Seth. I bet it's a telegram to say he's Sheriff agin.

SETH.

How much am I bid? How much? Goin' at ten cents.

MISS KIMANDER.

Don't you dast to give up that telegram, Seth Kimander, without me seein' it, or you'll hear from me at home.

[*Meanwhile* FREDERICKA *has gone behind the desk, stepped on a chair, and now snatches the telegram from* SETH *and pushes him off desk. She glances at the message and then gives it to* CURTIS, *who reads it.* CURTIS *keeps silence, looking around at the group of expectant faces. Then he turns to* LORD BUNN *and shakes hands with him.* LORD BUNN *instantly kisses* RUTH, *leaving a smudge on her nose, and as the others laugh,* RUTH *puts her hands to her face and runs off pursued by* LORD BUNN.

CURTIS.

Come, Dolly. Home and pack up. We take the first train out for New York. [MRS. WOODWARD *leaves room and* CURTIS, *following her, turns on threshold and addresses* LUCIUS.] Lucius, we'll all come up here to board next summer if you'll promise to keep O. B. as your hired girl.

[*Exit* CURTIS, *laughing.* LUCIUS, *chuckling, sits down at table and throws one leg over it.* MISS KIMANDER *cuffs* SETH, *and exits, saying*

MISS KIMANDER.

You jest wait till you get home, Seth Ki-

mander. When I once start in you'll feel worse'n a hull Sunday supplement!

SETH.

Reckon I'd better reach them hound-pups afore she does.

[SETH *shakes hands with* PETER *and exit. Bell rings.* JACKSON *goes to attend to it.*

JACKSON.

Number 6 wants his supper? Jest wait a minute. [*To* PETER.] Peter, kindly remove your lady. The language I'm a-goin' to use to Number 6 ain't goin' to be fit for no lady to hear. [PETER *exit with* FREDERICKA. JACKSON *continues at speaking-tube.*] That you, Number 6? John, the ash-man, ain't it? Oh, yes. Wal, hold the pipe to your ear. Got it? Close, now. Don't let it drop. Sure you're hunched right up agin it so's not to lose a word? Yes? [*Curtain begins to descend.*] Wal, now, listen!

[*Draws back, takes a good breath, puts mouth to tube, and*

CURTAIN

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